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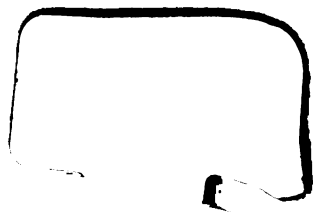
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YAZOO STORIES

BY
BEVERLY CARRADINE

Author of

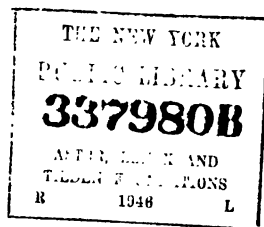
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MAJOR ROSSER

MAJOR ROSSER

Major Rosser was the owner of several hundred slaves and a large beautiful cotton plantation in Mississippi. He was one of the best pistol shots in the State and was equally proficient in horsemanship. His met-tled steed, Black Hawk, might paw, plunge, rear or kick as he pleased, but the Major kept his saddle with an easy, undulating grace that was delightful to behold.

His title of Major" was not won by any act of bravery on his part performed on the field of battle amid whizzing of shot bursting of shell and the cries of the dying mingled with the thunder of cannon and the rattle of musketry. It was obtained in a much easier and less dangerous manner. A military com-

pany was formed in his county, assembled once, elected Rosser as the commanding officer; and never met again. It is well known however, that the honorary appellation of Captain is one of comparative insignificance in the South, and so the public, in its own irresistible way, promoted Captain Rosser to the rank of Major without going through the formality of an election, or securing the necessary papers from the government.

At the age of thirty-five Major Rosser was still unmarried. He was considered a confirmed old bachelor, and, as such, he seemed to be perfectly content. With his hounds napping on the front gallery; his revolvers swung from nails in his room; his slippers, shoes, boots, and boot-jack piled in a corner; his meerschaum, briar root, clay and cob pipes on the mantel, mixed up with boxes and bags of tobacco, perique, kilikinick and other brands, he seemed to want nothing else. He was a satisfied man.

He had a few favorite books, which with the "Picayune" and the "Memphis Appeal," met his mental wants. A bountiful table with the well known Southern cooking of

hot biscuit, broiled chicken, egg cornbread, golden waffles, spongy buckwheat cakes and dripped coffee, not to mention other palatable dishes of the dinner hour, amply sustained the body, while a pleasant circle of town and country friends satisfied all the cravings of the social nature.

The Major possessed the most quiet of temperaments. He was a man of few words, often not speaking for hours. One would have thought that he was asleep but for the little puffs of blue smoke which were emitted with a certain regularity either from his mouth or from the bowl of the richly colored meerschaum. Whether occupying the rocker in his room, or reclining in an easy chair at the end of the gallery, he would often sit for hours looking over the shaded lawn, the rows of negro cabins, and the broad cotton fields to the dark line of green woods in the distance, a silent but always an observant man.

He had another peculiarity. All questions that were put to him, whether simple or complex, he answered only after the greatest deliberation. A conversation with the Major was a memorable event, and, to a nervous

person, a trying ordeal. Generally several minutes elapsed between the query and the reply. Often when the response was given it had been delayed so long that the questioner had forgotten what he asked, or, that he had asked anything at all. Rapid and numerous interrogatives never disconcerted him in the least. He took the first that came, ignoring the others, carefully weighed the pros and cons, slowly delivered his opinion, and then proceeded to the next in order. The superficial observer sometimes thought that the Major was either lacking in intelligence or was not interested in the conversation, but such was not the case. Neither was he absent minded, as some thought. He saw and heard everything. He was simply cautious.

Some malicious individuals thought that he was lazy, but they also wronged him. He had an independent fortune and was under no necessity of working. He likewise possessed a temperament which made it possible for him to enjoy sitting a long time in one place. This was not without its excellence, inasmuch as it did no harm to any one

else, and brought contentment to the main party. But there were gleams in his eyes sometimes, and occasional lines about the mouth, which indicated that he could be a fearful man in the matter of deeds if aroused.

There had been but one great outbreak in his life and this had occurred when he was twenty-one years old. It happened several months after the death of his father, which sad event left him the sole owner of Wildwood Plantation and the solitary occupant of the family mansion. At that time he returned from the county seat one day "rip roarin' drunk," as the negroes called it. He burst out of the woods on Black Hawk, who was flying like the wind, a crimson faced, hatless spectacle of intoxication. The reins hung loose on the horses neck and in either hand he carried a revolver which he fired with every few bounds of the rushing animal, looking all the while the very personification of a demon of wrath and destruction.

He swept up and down the quarter streets, knocking over barrels and chicken coops, tearing down whole panels of fence, and

shooting at everything alive that crossed his path, from a chicken to a negro.

The slaves fled in every direction. Some took refuge in the woods, others in the fields, and some even went to neighboring plantations where they reported that;

"Mars Bob Rosser done gone plum 'stracted."

It was three days before all the fugitives returned; and the whole neighborhood talked of the happening for years.

It was shortly after this that he was elected Captain of the Military company; every one being convinced that he could lead men, and charge and shoot when the proper time came.

After the escapade just described the owner of Wildwood resumed his usual quiet life, which, judging from outward appearances, did not seem to have in it a greater mental and physical force than that beheld in the beginning of what many would have pronounced a dull common place existence.

At the age of thirty-six, much to the surprise of everybody the Major married. Attending a fish fry one day, he was thrown in

the company of a black eyed widow, the relict of one Solomon Crump, a school teacher, who died early, and in lieu of money left his wife still young and childless with what wisdom he could spare, and a personal property of her own, made up of those arts and graces which are peculiarly powerful when brought to bear on character's like Major Rossers.

Some men have to be hunted up, petted, courted, flattered, and almost proposed to in order for matrimony to be consummated. The Major was such a man. He would doubtless have been caught sooner but for the fact that he had remained so much at home. With Joe to blacken his boots and saddle his horse, Dilsy in the kitchen, Charlotte in the dining room, and Rufus the driver and overseer, with whom to talk over the work and crops, he had not felt the need of human companionship and hence had not been open to attacks from the female husband hunter.

But the fish fry settled the matter. On the homeward journey the carryall in which the widow was riding broke down and the Major drove the interesting lady in his buggy to

the home of her married sister, five miles away.

Mrs. Crump lost no time. She put satin on her manners, velvet around her voice and sighed with her eyes full of tears when he said in reply to her question, that he dwelt all alone at Wildwood.

She was not yet thirty, passably good looking, and knew how to bait, throw and draw certain kinds of lines. As she studied the fish by her side, she saw that a scoop net would answer far better than a delicate hook with an almost invisible worm. So, taking up the net, she brushed some dust from his shoulder, removed a horse-hair from his sleeve, passed her dainty handkerchief over his hat which the wind had blown on the buggy floor, reached for and returned the whip just when he wanted it or had finished with it, and cooed and fluttered and hovered over him in one charming nerve tingling way after another until it was evident to her black calculating eyes that the being she wanted was already entangled in her meshes.

Her thoughtful, refined ministry was so different from Dilsy's rough ways, and was

so superior to the services of the housemaid, that the man, phlegmatic as he was, was deeply stirred and began to find the idea of a mistress of his mansion, who would also be a pleasant companion, not at all disagreeable. Before he left the house Mrs. Crump's sister, playing into the widow's hand, as women of this relationship have been occasionally known to do, exacted a promise from the Major to "call soon."

"When?" asked the Major in his quiet way.

"O, you can't come too soon," cooed the widow, with her most captivating smile.

The Major came the next day.

The two sisters, peeping through the blinds of an upper window, saw him drive in the gate. They looked at each other with a strange expression in their eyes, and then the charmer, with a glance in the mirror, descended the stairs to meet the web woven fly whom she declared, she was—

"So surprised and yet so charmed to see."

The sister also gave him a cordial welcome and later in the day proposed that the two should drive to Lover's Leap, and sent them off with the laughing admonition,

"Not to be gone too long, and above all things not to jump off the Bluff, but consent to live a good while like two sensible people."

Mrs. Crump asked for permission to drive. The horse was quite spirited and the Major was frequently compelled to grasp the reins to assist the widow, who was not at all skillful, but very charming in her helplessness. Sometimes when this occurred their hands touched, and the Major finally noticed that every time this happened the fair one would withdraw hers less quickly. Once he even ventured on a slight pressure of her finger tips. He was really alarmed at his own temerity but when he looked at her and found her face wreathed in smiles he breathed freely again.

When they returned from the drive they were an engaged couple. The marriage took place two months later, and Mrs. Crump became Mrs. Robert Rosser and the mistress of one of the finest plantations in Mississippi.

On the very first day of their wedded life the Major discovered, to his profound astonishment, a talon on the foot of the dove

he had brought home to coo for him. The second day he found another. The same afternoon he observed that the bill of his domestic pet was not straight, as he had first imagined, but had a decided curve. On the third day he awoke to the fact that he had not heard a single coo up to that time, but caws and croaks instead. On the fourth day he saw plainly that the bird was a hawk instead of a dove, and before the week was complete he admitted to himself that he had been badly sold and that a hell on earth had begun.

The first thing that she did was to drop the "Major" and call him Mister Rosser. "The idea," she said, "of a man being called Major who had never been in a single battle."

Then came endless ridicule of his habits and "old style ways." His easy chair was removed from the porch to the cellar. His guns, pistols, books, horns, pipes, etc. all disappeared, and the quondam old bachelor apartment became a woman's bedroom, without a single suggestion of male occupancy. The Major never felt at home in the boudoir

after the transformation, so he seldom crossed its portal.

The new ruler also changed cooks repeatedly, and Joe was banished to the cotton field. She gave Charlotte a cowhiding for dropping a soup tureen, and broke the plantation bugle over Samantha's head for being awkward in handling the loom.

It was a study to watch the Major as he saw without seeming to observe the transformation that was going on in his household. He said nothing, but quietly smoked his briar root pipe, sitting on the doorstep, or on a settee at the end of the verandah. His old reclining chair had disappeared a few days after Mrs. Rosser made the remark that it was "only fit for the ash pile."

The servants whispered, grinned and wondered at the unmistakable subjugation of the husband. The neighbors laughed and buzzed and talked about—

"The greatest case of hen pecking ever known in those parts."

The Major smoked on quietly, but at times there was a strange gleam in his eye, and on several occasions he was observed to remove

the pipe from his mouth and gazing abstractedly at the bowl, speak to it words which the bystander could not hear.

Mrs. Rosser might have taken warning from this ominous silence, but instead of doing so, she continued to twist higher the string of the domestic instrument on which she was playing; while remarks which she at first uttered in a low voice intended only for the ears of the servants, were now spoken so as to reach the Major.

"If there was anything in the world she hated, it was to see a man lolling around the house all day."

"Men were of no account anyhow."

"A woman had to marry a man to find out how cranky and selfish he was."

"About all that most men were good for was to lay around the house and poison the air with filthy old tobacco smoke, while their wives slaved themselves to death from morning to night."

"As for her part, she just couldn't endure a lazy man. What would she not give if she could lay her eyes on a man with some fire and spunk in him."

The Major heard all these remarks as it was intended that he should; but gave no sign except that the nostrils were slightly distended and that strange gleam would appear in his eyes.

One day he asked the servant who stood behind his chair at meals if he remembered the time he got drunk and came home and cleared out the whole plantation with his horse and pistol.

"I'd lak to know, Marse Bob, who's gwine to forgit dat day," replied the man, "Hit meks me trimble yit when I ricollecks how you come a rippin' an' a chargin', and a whoopin', an' a shootin', right and lef', all th'u' de quarters, till all we niggers tuk to de woods."

A most plebeian snort came from the thin nostrils of Mrs. Rosser. With face partly hidden by her coffee cup, she said with a most provoking smile to the servant girl behind her:

"The idea of Mister Rosser getting up a stir like that. It is too ridiculous for anything."

"Andy," said the Major, "do you know that

I feel like one of those spells is coming on me again”?

“Well I jes’ hopes to de Lawd dat it wont come in my time, Marse Bob.”

Mrs. Rosser snorted again louder than usual, but the Major took no heed of the curious sound.

“They say that volcanoës have big explosions after years of inactivity. Possibly men are like volcanoës in this respect. It has been fifteen years since my last explosion, hasn’t it Andy?”

“For de Lawd’s sake, doan ax me, Marse Bob; ’caze I don’ want to ’member nuffin ’bout dat day.”

Mrs. Rosser’s amusement here became so great that she had to leave the table; but her laughter could be heard from the pantry as she noisily arranged some dishes and delivered herself of her opinions on the subject to Charlotte.

“I’d like to see Mr. Rosser come home drunk. I’d give him such a reception that he’d be glad to remain sober forever after. My first husband did it once and I cured him for all time. I put him to bed, had his head

shaved and put mustard plasters all over it. When he woke in the morning and looked in the glass he fairly raved. Finally he asked me why I treated him that way. I replied that I thought he had brain fever and was going to die, so I did what I could to save him."

"I never had brain fever in my life," he said, with a pleading look in his eyes. "Don't ever administer such treatment again, and don't be alarmed when I come home in the same condition. Just put me to bed and I'll pull through all right."

"No, no, Mr. Crump," I said, "I'll treat you the same way every time you come home in that condition. It is the duty of a wife to do all she can for her husband, and if you should die for lack of proper attention, I would be miserable all the rest of my life. My! how I laughed when he left the room. But mind you, he never came home drunk again!"

The woman was silent a moment as if in pleased recollection, and then added:

"Just let Mister Rosser dare to come home drunk and I'll"

Here she brandished a carving fork in the

air so close to Charlotte that that damsel had to execute a remarkable leap to avoid the prongs.

After this, Mrs. Rosser's provoking remarks increased in number and she pressed the domestic yoke still harder upon her long suffering and silent husband.

It had always been the custom at Wildwood to dine at one o'clock, and the internal economy of the Major suffered greatly when that time arrived and there was no dinner. It was remarkable how the midday meal became later and later; first two o'clock, then three, then four and finally showed symptoms of reaching the period of five.

Still the Major offered no protest. But he talked more and more to the bowl of his pipe, and the angry gleam in his eye was almost constant. Mrs. Rosser might easily have seen the peculiar look which he turned upon her at times, but she was too much absorbed in herself or the perusal of a yellow back novel; or if she did, she gave no sign.

One afternoon the clock struck four and still dinner had not been announced. Glancing stealthily at her husband sitting at the

end of the gallery, she saw that he was talking to himself. Calling Charlotte, she bade her go softly behind her master's chair and hear what he was saying. A minute later the servant returned and reported:

"He sayin," Miss 'Livia, Dis emptiness I kinnot stan'."

This information afforded Mrs. Rosser so much pleasure that her form fairly shook; and she kept dinner waiting another hour.

On another occasion, her husband was so absorbed in a volume that he held in his hands that she had to speak several times.

"What is that you are reading so intently, Mister Rosser?"

Lowering the book and looking steadily at her, he replied:

"Volcanoes!"

She felt a peculiar emphasis was given the word, and it brought a thrill of vague alarm, but it soon passed away, and she went on in her usual course.

Everything up to this time seemed to indicate that the wife was the enthroned and crowned ruler of the household. And just like absolute monarchs, she was constantly

testing as well as tasting her power in a variety of exasperating ways. Some from their very littleness are not mentioned, lest it be construed as a reflection on the sex. Few people could have imagined the cat like torments to which she descended; but it all seemed to afford her the keenest delight. There were several things that alarmed her however, and one shocked her to such an extent that dinner was served at one o'clock for a week.

She woke once in the middle of the night, with the strange sensation that someone was looking at her. She usually slept with her arm over her face. Opening her eyes she glanced up quickly and beheld Major Rosser standing by the bedside and gazing down fixedly at her. There was something in the set expression of his face which was really terrifying and she came near crying out; but just then a window slammed and her husband turned away.

Another time she found him in the attic with a half dozen revolvers lying before him on the top of a flat trunk. They had all been freshly loaded and he was polishing them

with a piece of red flannel and slipping them back in their holsters which were attached to a large leather belt.

A few days later she overheard a conversation between her husband and the negro driver. The talk in some way had turned on the famous episode of fifteen years before when the Major, on the only drunken spree of his life, had charged over the plantation as if a thousand demons were after him.

"I kin see you now, Marse Bob," said the negro, "a bustin' outen de woods on Black Hawk, wid yoh eyes sot, hat gone, hair a flyin', a whoopin' an' a yellin', Black Hawk's hoofs a hittin' de road a blockerty-blockerty blockerty, an' dem pocket bull-dogs o' yourn a barkin' an' a sayin' yer bang! yer bang! yer bang! Who-ee! how we niggers did brek for de woods. Ole Uncle Sandy whut been laid up wid de rheumatiz two years an' moh, got outen his cabin as nimble an' as peart as a deer, an' even big fat Nancy cut an' run. I nuvver want to see sich a sight ag'in 'slong 'as I live. Marse Bob does you 'member how you kilt two o' yoh bes' cows an' put a ball

in Yaller Tom's leg when he wuz a cli'min de fence tryin' to git away fum you?"

Mrs. Rosser drowned her husband's reply with the stinging sentence:

"It must be a brave man indeed Rufus, who would shoot two cows, and a lame negro who was only trying to get out of the way."

The next morning Mrs. Rosser was even more provoking than usual and she discharged every piece of feminine artillery she possessed at her husband. As for the Major, he was never more quiet. In fact, he seemed to be in rather a good humor.

At ten o'clock he rode off on Wild Fire, a fine coal black stallion, high spirited and unmanageable by anyone except himself. He left word that he had gone to the County Seat six miles away, and would be back at noon. At that hour he had not returned. Neither did he come at one o'clock, two, nor three. Mrs. Rosser, accustomed to the regular habits of her husband, began to grow restless, and going frequently to the door, gazed anxiously up the road which entered the forest some distance from the house and wound its way to the town.

The hall clock chimed four. The dinner was cooked as dry as chip. The sun was hardly an hour high and still no Major Rosser.

She drew her chair to a spot near the window from which she could see the entire length of the highway up to its entrance in the timber. Just what kind of a reception she proposed to give her tardy spouse is not certainly known, but from the expression of her eyes and the lines about her mouth, it was doubtless intended to be a memorable one.

At half past five, a shot was heard in the woods. Then came the clatter of horse's hoofs and a yell that was simply terrific. A moment later from out the shadowy forest appeared her husband, hatless, his hair streaming in the wind, a pistol waving in his hand, while Wild Fire, half mad with fright was rushing down the road toward the house like a black thunder cloud.

As every leap of the thoroughly maddened steed brought the peril nearer to where she stood, Mrs. Rosser unconsciously put her hand to her breast and steeled herself for the ordeal, while she beheld the frightful sight

and heard the periodic crack of the pistol with the alternating whoop of the rider.

She could hardly credit her senses as she viewed the crimson face and rocking form of her husband. And when she saw the horse clear the gate without touching a hoof and come dashing toward the house not forty yards away, heard the crack of the pistol again and then a window pane within six feet of her shiver into fragments; though every mental faculty, every fibre and nerve of her body was in a state of the highest tension, yet she was so profoundly terrified that she could not move a step.

As the rider passed the house he yelled to her at the top of his voice, with a most diabolical expression of face,

"When I (hic) finish up the quarters, I'll (hic) 'tend to your case old lady."

With this startling war cry, he threw the empty pistol in her direction, breaking another window with a resounding crash, and wheeled towards the quadruple row of negro cabins.

Such a commotion as took place there had not been beheld since the Major's first erup-

tion fifteen years before. Men, women and children fled precipitately, some to the fields and others to the woods. Wild Fire snorted, plunged and struck fire from the rocks as he swept through the quarter streets, and such a medley of sounds filled the air, made up of the barking of dogs, gobbling of turkeys, squalling of chickens, squealing of pigs, with the shouts and cries of the negroes, together with the poppings of the revolvers and the yells of the Major that it verily seemed that Pandemonium itself had been turned loose.

Mrs. Rosser with her hand nervously fingering her throat, stood at the door watching the remarkable scene, and listening to the distant cries of terror and distress. A few minutes later when she saw that Wild Fire had been turned and was coming back toward the house, the female tyrant suddenly vacated her throne, and without any farewell address, apologies, or explanations, most ingloriously fled into the house locking and barring the door behind her.

Major Rosser circled around the dwelling twice, shooting in the upper panes of the

lower windows, whereupon Mrs. Rosser rushed to the second story and hid under the bed in a back room. The Major promptly elevated his artillery and began to pick out the panes in the upper windows. Immediately Mrs. Rosser sought refuge in the cellar.

She had hardly reached this place of refuge when she heard the most terrible sounds on the verandah in front. Could it be that the Major was riding Wild Fire up the steps and on to the gallery!

Yes! and not only this but he had turned the horse about and by dint of using the spur was making the great animal kick the front door to pieces!

The now thoroughly distracted woman left the cellar and ascended by a rear stairway to the second story again. She had hardly reached it when she heard the front door crash in and her husband, whom she was now convinced was insane, rode through the wide hall and into the parlor, still shooting while the crashing of the furniture showed that great havoc and destruction were going on below.

The next noise that reached the ears of the

trembling female crouched in a small back room was one that fairly froze the blood in her veins:

Major Rosser was riding up stairs on Wild Fire!

Up the steps they came, with an awful pounding of the iron shod feet, while the last of the pistols was discharged and the Major yelled:

"Let me get at her! She turned my house into a hell and now I'll give her a dose."

The frantic woman stopped to hear no more but raced down the back stairway, shot out of the door, fled to the barn and climbing into the loft, buried herself six feet under the hay!

* * * *

It took ten of the strongest negro men on the place to get Wild Fire down stairs again. Refusing to descend as he had ascended, it was necessary to blindfold, push, pull, and half carry him down.

Major Rosser, when his wife fled, fell across the bed without removing his boots, and seemed to sleep heavily all night. When

he opened his eyes the following morning the change about him was simply amazing.

If his marriage had been a dream, or we might say nightmare, and he had suddenly awakened in his old bachelor apartments, his surroundings could not have looked more familiar.

From his pillow, he surveyed the charming scene. His slippers were by his bedside; his rocking chair in the old corner; his pipes and tobacco bag, his blowing horn, powder flask, and shot pouch were all back in the places where he had kept them for fifteen years: his walking canes were in their rack which he had not beheld for months; and there was his double barrel fowling piece near the wardrobe, and yonder was his bootjack where he wanted it—in a word, everything was as it had been until the interloper appeared.

A pleased smile illumined the Major's features. Evidently the smile was seen by someone else; for truth to tell, Mrs. Rosser after making the transformation or rather restoration in the apartment while her husband slept, had retired to a back room and

with her eye applied to the key hole watched the sleeping man and waited for developments.

The smile was the sign she wanted, and she made bold to come in. But the change in her was more wonderful than the alteration in the room. The Major could scarcely credit it. She was all graciousness, thoughtfulness and attentiveness. Mrs. Rosser was dead or departed, and here was Mrs. Crump, with smiles and graces as if she was still angling for, and trying to land the masculine fish before her.

The beauty about all this change was, that as the days and weeks went by, it brought happiness to the woman herself, as well as comfort to others. She felt it, and everybody else recognized it. As for the Major, he saw to it that she lacked for nothing. A new carriage and a new piano were among some of the material exhibitions of his appreciation of the metamorphosis of his wife.

Several times after this she showed a disposition to reascend the throne; but the Major had only to take up the book "Volcanoes," or go to examining and oiling his

pistols, when Mrs. Rosser at once became a living combination of a cooing dove and a loving, playful little lamb.

She lived ten years following these events, and passed away leaving the name in the neighborhood of being the most devoted of wives and faithful of housekeepers. The Major had a handsome tombstone erected over her grave, and helped with a most liberal hand a number of her poor relatives.

After eleven years of connubial experience, the widower was thrown back upon a life similar to that of his old bachelorhood; only he resumed it with a stock of general knowledge about women which he certainly did not possess when he launched his bark upon the sea of matrimony. He seemed to be perfectly satisfied with the capital of information he had amassed in this line, and did not care to increase it by any other investment; so he remained in a state of singleness the rest of his days.

One afternoon, while smoking his favorite Kilikinick tobacco in his meerschau on the front gallery in company with an old con-

fidential friend and neighbor, Squire Stanley, the visitor said:

"Major, the whole community says that your life has been a blameless and correct one, with the exception of the two big drunks you got on, with fifteen years intervening."

The Major discharged a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling, and tapping his cheek reflectively with the amber mouth-piece of his pipe replied:

"I was never drunk but once in my life."

This statement was met by an exclamation of astonishment from the Squire, and the polite but prompt and earnest array of proofs as to the actualness of the two spree which had gone down upon the records of the neighborhood History as having undoubtedly taken place.

"It matters not," returned Major Rosser, "what the people say and how appearances may be against me, but the Almighty knows I was never drunk but once and that was thirty years ago."

"Do you mean to tell me," said the visitor, with his eyes fixed steadily on Rosser's unmoved countenance, "that you were not in-

toxicated when you shot a dozen balls in your house, made Wild Fire kick the door down, and rode him up the staircase to the second floor."

"As God is my judge," replied the Major quietly, and impressively, "I was as sober as I am now."

For a few moments the Major smoked reminiscently, and then knocking the ashes out of his meerschaum, put his hands upon his knees still holding the pipe, and fixing a steady, truthful look upon his guest, he said:

"One single gill of whiskey was all that was purchased in the County Seat that day. It did not go inside, but was dashed on my clothes. A two grain dose of sulphate of quinine makes my face turn a fiery red in a few minutes. The hat was left purposely in the edge of the woods. The wild dash from the timber was as carefully planned as it was executed. The pistol shots were fired by a perfectly trained hand intended to wound or kill nothing but a bad disposition. The pistol itself, thrown violently, was nevertheless aimed at a window to make a crash, and add to the panic. Wild Fire had been

trained in secret to kick anything to pieces when goaded by the spur. All the whoops and yells were put on. In a word, the whole thing was a painted, befeathered, Indian-like demonstration to throw "The Tea Overboard." It was the Declaration of Independence, Battle of Lexington, Capture of Burgoyne and Surrender at York Town all in one. It obtained at once from all foes, domestic as well as foreign, the instantaneous recognition of a great new power which had arisen with a strong central government, and whose president was elected for life."

Squire Stanley gave a long, low whistle which meant volumes, as the Major concluded the lengthiest speech he had ever been known to make in his life.

Rufus, who had come up during the utterance of the last half dozen words and had no idea what was being talked about, took his seat on the bottom step and ejaculated, "Bless de Lawd—dats so!"

Major Rosser refilled his pipe with fragrant golden-colored tobacco, lighted it with a coal of fire a little darkey brought him on a chip, leaned his head back, half closed his

eyes, and puffing soft clouds of blue and white smoke in the air, looked as pleased and contented as Washington must have felt when he received the sword of Cornwallis, and soon after was elected the Chief Magistrate of the United States of America.

CHARLIE GOODFELLOW

CHARLIE GOODFELLOW

I.

Charlie Contrasted with a Friend.

I possessed in my youth and early manhood two friends who were perfectly antipodal in appearance and disposition. One had the face of an undertaker, the other that of a harlequin. The countenance of the former was drawn after an elongated pattern, while that of the other, moon-like in shape had a horizontal line, or opening, running clear across the facial country with marked tendency at times to reach the ears, and which Charlie called a smile. One was in a chronic condition of low spirits; the other over-flowed with fun and good nature.

Cast as I was with these two very differ-

ent companions, I was naturally affected by the centrifugal and centripetal life forces, and doubtless kept in a midway kind of orbit, and saved in a sense from the character tangents of either side.

All honor, however, to these friends of my youth. Both are today under the sod; the sunny hearted preceding the low spirited one to the tomb by twenty years.

The hat is lifted, and a flower thrown on each grave in appreciation of the sterling qualities which were possessed by this couple and that were perfectly apparent to the intimate friend, if not always to the casual acquaintance. Solid worth was under the jolly exterior of Charlie Goodfellow; and a faithful loving heart beneath the melancholy mien and speech of Downey McKnight.

McKnight's gloom was peculiar as the reader will perceive in a moment, and manifested, if not relieved itself, in more than one way.

One form of grief expression was beheld in poems that Downey wrote and which were invariably of the most depressing na-

ture. Several of them appeared in the county paper, and every one had something to the purport that the winds were whispering low, or the waves were murmuring low, or the sun was sinking low. One day Goodfellow told McKnight that all his poems were "low down." The poet gave a nervous start, looked pained, and after that for quite a while the ballad changes were rung on swell, knell and farewell.

I am confident that McKnight, with the exception of one other life situation or condition, was as happy as he with his temperament could be, when he had penned one of these dirges and could secure a listener to the funeral song. The expression on his face was not only one of content, but actual joyfulness, as he jingled mournfully along with rhymes of care and despair and sever, never and forever. He was one of those beings who seemed glad to be miserable.

The other occasion to which reference was made, and wherein Downey surpassed himself in having the blues, was the hour in which he had partaken of an excellent and bountiful dinner. The better the meal, the

deeper was the sadness. Who would think of such a thing? And yet at such moments the man fairly revelled and rolled in melancholy.

McKnight evidently enjoyed every mouthful. He seemed to dispose of rich and luscious portions with regret, as if reluctant to have them leave the palate and throat. And yet the pensiveness of the face and the tone of sadness in which he spoke would be most marked at this very time. Moreover the sorrow was after a crescendo fashion, growing as the meal proceeded and the courses followed each other in appetizing order.

As McKnight opened his napkin and spread it on his lap, he would heave a low sigh. As he passed from soup to fish his gloom steadily increased. As the meat and vegetables came on and disappeared in sections, his voice took on a husky, smothered, pathetic sound, while his remarks and fragmentary conversation bore upon the emptiness of life, the vanity of earthly things, while dark hints were made of breaking hearts and despairing lives being often at our own tables and yet unrecognized.

At a desert of custard, pudding, almonds, raisins and black coffee, to which Downey paid the most devoted attention, I have heard him say, with tears standing in his eyes, that true enjoyment and satisfaction could only be found in other worlds and existences.

After this, lighting a meerschaum pipe or Havana cigar, McKnight would stretch himself on a sofa in the Library, or in a hammock on the porch, and blowing the soft blue and white smoke into little clouds or rings from his lips, he would say in a mellowed and most melancholy tone that "life to him was a lonely desert; and the world a howling waste." He also said that "the star of hope had set" and that "he any day would gladly hail the portals of the tomb."

The fact of my juniority to the speaker by several years, he being then twenty-two, was sufficient in itself to lift him on a high pedestal of regard; but when in addition, Downey's voice, rich and oily from his dining, came drowsily to the ear, speaking in low, muffled accents of desert wastes; stars setting in dim misty horizons; and lonely

graves under sighing pine trees or by the bank of sad sea waves; the effect was very fine indeed, and I greatly admired McKnight and hoped to behold life as he did when I became older.

Still the effect of seeing Charlie Goodfellow, after watching the star of hope set on McKnight's sandy life plain, was very grateful and inspiring; and I could but feel that for a long and steady pull, and for a wholesome journey through the years allotted man on earth, the cheerfulness and brightness of Goodfellow would be far more desirable.

Unlike McKnight, who had a good income and so could nurse and indulge his moods and tenses, Charlie had to work for a living. His active life may have, through the bounding blood in his veins, thrown off the mental depressions that belonged to an existence of sluggishness and inactivity, but more than that he possessed a large capital of good spirits, and so was a good fellow in disposition and manners, as well as a Goodfellow in name.

He started his business life as a clerk in a

drug store. Our more intimate acquaintance began with him in quite an unusual way.

I had stepped in a Pharmacy to purchase some little articles when I discovered Goodfellow, then a youth of eighteen or twenty, rolling on the floor in what appeared to be an apoplectic fit, or some kind of convulsion. Full of sympathy I knelt by him to render what assistance I could by lifting his head, chafing his hands, etc., when I saw that he was shaking with laughter, his face wreathed with smiles, while ha, ha, ha's were being gasped, coughed and literally blown out of his mouth.

"Why what on earth is the matter with you, Goodfellow?" I asked, pulling him up and propping him against the counter in a sitting position.

His reply, as he wiped his streaming eyes and tried to control his voice, was:

"Just sit here in the door a few minutes, as I have been doing, and watch the faces of the people as they go by and you will see what's the matter with me."

It was a dull business season, very few coming into the store, and so Charlie had

been entertaining himself by observing the human panorama as it went by on the pavement before him. The result, as has been seen, was his collapse on the floor.

At his urgent entreaty I took my position on the door step and began looking at the moving, living picture show. While I did not fall over on the floor like Goodfellow, yet I began smiling in a minute's time, and in five minutes laughed until the tears rained down my cheeks.

The full power of the Street Vitascope can only be realized by doing as Charlie and the writer did; for no description can do the matter justice. It requires the eye vision, and not the tongue portrayal, of a regular pavement procession to enable one to realize what it really is as a fact and effect. I can only say that the variety of faces following in quick succession and these same countenances bearing every kind of expression, makes a Vaudeville Show, the like of which was never seen on boards, stage, or platform of any kind.

Some physiognomies look pleased, others angry, some glad, others sad; some pedes-

trians are muttering and talking to themselves, others shaking their heads solemnly in an absent-minded way, while still others glide by grim and grum as so many stone images.

Then will come a group of grinning idiots, next a long undertaker face, third, a man pulling his nose, fourth, another working on his chin or scratching his ear. Some have their lips drawn to one side, others with mouths wide open, some cross-eyed, others cock-eyed, some are trotting, others are pacing, and in a word the diversity of the street parade is so great, and the contrasts coming so quickly and unexpectedly are so remarkable that no programmed human show, or circus, can approach in a thousand miles of it as to numbers of actors and naturalness and faithfulness to their multitudinous parts.

It is a Vaudeville strictly, for the very poor. It is gotten up without advertisements or cost to the attendant; doorsteps and heads of alleys are reserved boxes without charge; and the Play, itself, suddenly thrown before the observers convulses with merriment and always brings down the house.

I I.

Charlie with the Animals.

Absent from my native town for several years, when I returned I was informed that Goodfellow had purchased a poultry and dairy farm combined, located a few miles out in the country and was now residing upon it.

Receiving a message to visit him and spend a few days, I did so, and found my friend pleasantly domiciled, while his work being mainly one of an easy, fitful supervision of competent hired labor, left him an abundance of leisure on his hands.

He was in a very jovial frame of mind and told me that he was experiencing the deepest enjoyment in the study of animal life, while he was constantly playing pranks and jokes on every creature that moved in the backyard, poultry enclosure, stable lot as well as field, and that in the fun furnished him by farm, lot, stall and coop, he was having the time of his life.

He informed me, with a radiant face, that he had greased the planks of a little, sloping

bridge which the cattle had to cross, and the scene which followed of slipping, staggering, falling down and mooing aloud surpassed in its entertainment any circus he had ever attended.

He fastened a grain of corn to a string and then would jerk it away before a rooster, hen or turkey could pick it up. The puzzled, surprised look of the fowls as they turned their silly little heads from one side to the other as if trying to solve the mystery of the vanished bait, set our friend off in a ringing peal of laughter.

He tarred the roosts in the hen house and such a fluttering and squalling time at once ensued that Goodfellow stamped around on the outside of the chicken tenement, clapped his hands, and cried out "It beat the world."

He placed duck eggs under a setting hen and hen eggs under a duck, then went into ecstasies over the confusion which followed. The hen of course went distracted when she saw the ducklings, that she thought to be her chickens, take to swimming on the pond; while the duck cranium was tried to the limit to understand why her brood refused to come

on the water, where she was so much at home.

He dressed a hog up in a bear skin and turned him loose in the midst of the drove, and such a squealing, scampering around and general uproar took place as brought several of the farm hands on the scene with clubs and guns in their hands to see what in the name of the National Constitution and the Bylaws was the cause of the commotion.

They found Goodfellow rolling on the ground and hugging himself in a kind of physical knot of enjoyment at the excitement and hullabaloo. The men came in an ace of shooting the disguised hog under the impression that his bearship was not only after the swine in the lot, but had already fatally wounded their Manager, whom they beheld writhing and twisting before them in the dust.

Another evening my friend was skirting one of his fields, when he saw a shoat some thirty feet away coming up the narrow jimson-weed lined path that ran by the side of the rail fence. The hog was trotting along indulging in that tremulous chant peculiar

to those animals, and doubtless absorbed in anticipations of the straw sty and corn pen awaiting him at the barn.

Quick as thought Goodfellow turned and stooped so that his head was near the ground, while his face, upside down gazed through his legs.

The shoat did not see this startling spectacle until he was not more than ten feet distant; when suddenly he was confronted with a physical phenomenon for which he had no precedent in his history of the past, and hence no word to describe in his entire pig vocabulary.

He instantly stopped his chant and trot and stood with one foot upraised and wearing a look of profound astonishment. For Lo! here was a being of some kind whose head hung between his lower limbs and his face set upside down! What could it be? And what must he do in view of such an unparalleled monster in his path!

At the very same second that the hog decided it was most prudent to retire and give the strange creature before him a wide berth and complete right of way, Goodfellow slap-

ped his hands together loudly and let forth a ear-splitting yell.

The animal, perfectly panic stricken, gave a big "Whoof" and whirling about to run, struck his head with terrific force against a sharp, projecting fence rail and was instantly killed.

Goodfellow's mirth at once left him. The man was genuinely grieved over the pitiful occurrence, and with tears in his eyes, stooped over the lifeless form and with sorrowful touch of his hand, said:

"Poor little Piggie!" I never intended to do this. I never dreamed you would hurt yourself. I am so sorry."

Charlie was soberer for several hours than I ever knew him to be before. Then he had an additional thought to increase his seriousness, and that was he had lost ten or fifteen dollars as the cost of his practical joke.

But the fountain-like good humor of the man soon began to manifest itself again, and that very afternoon I had to join with him in a hearty laugh over one of his experiences, as he called them, with his four-legged friends.

A little before sundown he took me out to the barn to witness a sight which he claimed was equal to a Monkey Show with a hand organ thrown in.

Stationing ourselves behind a large door in the building that opened into the lot, he whispered:

"I have trained a young bullock to make a regular acrobatic display of himself every evening and exactly at this hour."

For a number of preceding days he had hidden himself behind the portal which was then concealing us, and would there await the approach of this grave looking, young bovine. Then just as the animal would get half across the threshold Goodfellow would suddenly appear from his hiding place with a loud snort. And then such a bellow and scamper on the bullock's part down the long dim, shadowy stable to some remote stall would take place, as can better be imagined than described.

"Now," said Charlie, whispering, "My two year old friend goes through the whole performance, leaving nothing out of the pro-

gram, each evening at this hour without my having to say or do a single thing."

He had hardly finished this information, where here came the animal in question with a sober, meditative look, stopped just an instant near the door, gave an anxious glance at the hiding place, got half way through the portal, seemed to expect an interruption and then, suddenly with a snort and bellow, let fly both of his hind hoofs at the door, and fairly flew down the long length of the shadowy stable.

It was certainly amusing and Charlie laughed until the tears of mirth streamed down his face.

"Oh!" he gasped, "there is a heap of fun in animals, if you just know how to get it out."

I had to return to town the next morning and did not see Goodfellow again for a month. This time we met on the street. Taking me aside he said:

"I am in for it now."

"What do you mean?" I queried.

"Oh!" he replied, "I am afraid my humor with animals is going to break me financially."

"What has happened now," I continued.

"Well, this time the bill is not fifteen, but ninety dollars against me."

"What have you done?" I asked, now quite interested.

"I will tell you," he answered. "I was walking out on the bank of the Yazoo River yesterday afternoon and saw a splendid mule sound asleep by the side of the road. The animal had been purchased the day before, as I found out afterwards, by a man named Hobson, who owns a small farm in my neighborhood. The mule had been turned out of the lot after a trip to town, and lying flat in the dust had fallen asleep in the drowsy sunshine.

"As I drew near I noticed one of his ears standing straight up, looking so like a trumpet that I could not resist the sudden temptation, which came upon me, to put it to some practical use. So creeping up softly to the slumberer, I stooped down and approaching my mouth close to his ear, shouted in a stentorian voice:

"Are you asleep?"

"I am sure" continued Goodfellow, "that

my friend in the dust thought that the Day of Judgment for mules had come, and he was unprepared. He made a sudden leap upwards and sideways, got one of his fore-legs doubled under him in some manner, and broke it at the knee.

"His owner, after a talk with the veterinary surgeon, saw that the animal was crippled for life, and so had him shot. Mr. Hobson, then had an interview with me afterwards, and that of a most lively character. During this conversation I was not allowed a moment to express my regret and tell him I was on the way to his house to right the unpremeditated wrong. In the hottest language, and without listening to me, he told me that I had to pay him ninety dollars, and that at once.

"This I have just done, coming to town to do it and feel very deeply that I am a sadder, if not wiser man. I have made up my mind also never to ask another slumbering descendant of a donkey if he is asleep. Such kindly inquiries, or office calls, are too expensive. I shall allow the laws of nature to take their course in the return of animation,

consciousness and reflection to every long auricled quadruped, without any help or interruption from me for the balance of my life."

By this time Goodfellow was once more in as cheerful a frame of mind as though his pocket-book had not been drawn upon in a way that would require several months of economy before it would be restored to its normal condition; and as though no irate Mr. Hobson was fuming around on the street and in stores and offices, while hotly delivering himself about;

"A fool of a man, who had no better sense than to ask a fool of a mule if he was asleep; when the biggest idiot in the land could have seen at a glance that he was asleep."

Mr. Hobson was not a brilliant man and was utterly devoid of all sense of humor as well. So he continued his strictures to an admiring and highly amused circle of listeners:

"What on earth made Goodfellow ask such a fool question? Did he suppose the mule could understand what he said? And what if he was asleep? Was it any of Good-

fellow's business? In the name of common sense can't a mule go to sleep without being waked up like a—like a—like a— I don't know what! Aint a mule got no rights? Must a mule have his ear bawled into just because he is trying to snatch a nap between jobs of work?"

When these red-hot explosive utterances were repeated to Goodfellow, he fairly doubled up with laughter and said between bursts of merriment:

"Well I am getting paid back already for my ninety dollars. Why a season ticket to a comic opera, or a trip to the Adirondacks would not begin to give me the enjoyment I am procuring out of Hobson and his mule. And even when Hobson forgets his trouble, and ceases his onslaughts on me, yet I will have the memory of his sayings, my opera will go on, my Adirondack trip will be extended, and all without any expense over and beyond the original payment of ninety dollars.

III.

Charlie versus Cupid.

A year after the occurrence just related, Goodfellow gave up his farm and returned to town. One day I asked him:

"Charlie, why don't you get married and settle down?"

"Nothing would please me better," he replied with a smile, "but two things make it impossible."

"What two things," I asked.

"Well, first I am bound to take in consideration the effect of my nature, or temperament on my children. We must consider posterity, you know. I am confident that the spirit of fun is so developed in me that my descendants would be born incarnated jokes, and my household would become in time a Vaudeville Show. Think of being a progenitor of a set of clowns."

I had to laugh over this presentation of the matter, but thought I would upset his arguments by the next remark.

"Why not marry a very melancholy woman, a girl who writes obituary poetry,

speaks of being misunderstood and like our mutual friend McKnight, accuses life of being a desert waste, and lays charges against the star of Hope that it is setting behind the sand hills of time."

"Well, right there," replied Goodfellow, you bring up one of the very causes of my remaining in a state of celibacy. Do you know that I cannot get to the point of proposing marriage without going into a perfect spasm of laughter.

"Twenty times I reckon I have tried it, and right when I ought to be tender, sentimental, serious or business-like, here comes up some old fool recollection of a funny thing in the past; or I get a view of myself as a meek faced, bald-headed husband and father; and then I go to grinning like an idiot, or exploding in laughter like a gunpowder magazine, and of course the whole thing is off."

Here Charlie, who seemed anything but crushed over the memory of his marriage failures, assumed his favorite doubled-up position of mirth, and looked like he had a com-

bination attack of sickness made up of swamp ague and a case of apoplexy.

"What do the women say when you go off in your fun spasm that way?" I asked.

"Oh!" he replied, wiping his eyes, "Some of them freeze up and some boil over. Some get insulted and fairly blister me with their tongues, while still others sweep out of the room without a word and never speak to me again."

Exceedingly entertained I kept silence, while Charlie, in a kind of musing tone, continued his checkered love history.

"On one occasion," he said, "the girl burst into tears. I felt sorry for the position I had placed her in by my idiotic way of laughing, but I could not help it. And what do you think! Another girl pulled my hair and boxed my jaws!"

This last remembrance was too much for Goodfellow, and over he went on the sofa, shaking with merriment as if he had a congestive chill.

"Why don't you write a letter proposing marriage?" I suggested.

"I have repeatedly done so," was the response "and it was as complete a failure, if

not worse, than the other. Why I have to tear up so many sheets of paper trying to compose the right style of document that it not only affects my purse, but it takes more time from my work than I can afford to spare."

Goodfellow here began chewing in silence on a wooden toothpick, seemed plunged in retrospective thought for a few moments, and then blowing the splinter from his lips, resumed:

"How to start a letter is the first trouble. If I begin, say for instance, 'Miss Julia,' that seems too formal. If I commence 'Dear Miss Julia' I invariably think of dry-goods accounts and millinery bills. 'Sweet Miss Julia' is unallowable, and ridiculous anyhow, for the woman is not sugar. 'Honored and Respected Miss Julia' sounds like a petition to Congress, or the Pulpit announcement that the funeral services will be continued at the grave."

By this time Charlie's face was beaming with pleasure. He certainly realized a lot of comfort, somehow, in recalling his blunders and failures in the marriage line.

"One girl", he continued, "was the daughter of Colonel Stake, who lives down the River near Satartia. Well, I commenced the letter, 'Dear Miss Stake'; then tried 'Honored Miss Stake'; and still dissatisfied at the way it sounded, altered again to 'Miss Stake'; and as I saw it was a "Miss Stake" all the way through, I got one of my spells of fun on me, and laughed all my love out for the young lady before I could stop."

"Then," he went on, "If I get the caption of the letter all right and satisfactory, here comes the rest of the effusion in which I am expected to say, "I never loved but one," when I have been devoted to twenty. By that time I get so highly amused over the whole thing that I cannot proceed further to save my life.

"Now, notice this curious fact" pursued Charlie, with twinkling eyes, "if, while penning the letter, I have a laughing spell, then I don't want the girl to accept me. My love seems to go with the laugh. So what on earth is to become of me? Don't you see, as I have told you, that mine is a hopeless case? That all on account of this queer temperament,

this constitutional peculiarity that I have evidently inherited, I am doomed, hopelessly doomed, to live and die an old bachelor."

**STORIES AROUND A
CAMP FIRE.**

STORIES AROUND A CAMP FIRE

Four white men, and two negro servants, were grouped about a camp fire one night, in the very heart of one of Yazoo's deepest and most tangled swamps. It was fully a half dozen miles to the base of Walnut Hills on the east, and the same distance with a similar stretch of dark woods to the river on the west. North and south, for a greater number of miles, an unbroken wilderness lay silent and shadowy.

The flame of the fire lighted up the sluggish flow of a bayou on whose shore the camp was pitched; illumined the great tree trunks standing thickly around; revealed like a silver ribbon a spring winding down a shelving bank; and fell with fainter glow on

the green front of a canebrake which pressed in dense ranks on one side as if meditating a charge across the stream upon the dark phalanxes of timber beyond.

As resinous knots of pine would be thrown on the burning pile, the increased light brought out a view of a neighboring slough with cypress trees draped in long streamers of gray moss, cypress knees beneath looking like grave stones, rustling fan-like palmettos stirring uneasily in the variable night air as if agitated by something, and several strange vista-like openings in the woods, like grass grown and long forsaken roads, and disappearing mysteriously with a distant bend in the black depths of the forest beyond.

Two white tents were pitched near the fire; and an Indian style of shelter made of Palmetto leaves, fronted from the other side. In picturesque confusion could be seen rifles and double-barrelled shot guns leaning against trees, while pistol holsters, hunters' horns, shot pouches and saddles and bridles were swung to limbs, rested on logs, or were lying on the ground. A remoter view showed horses picketed for the night, crunching gol-

den ears of corn and chewing meditatively on bundles of sweet smelling, yellow fodder.

The Caucasian element of the party consisted of two Southern cotton planters with a couple of visiting friends from Yazoo City, a merchant and a lawyer, and all engaged in that peculiarly fascinating sport, a camp hunt.

The servants, owned by one of the cotton planters, were busily engaged with coffee pots, skillets and frying pans in preparing the evening meal. The blended odors of the fragrant Java, well done biscuit and juicy venison steaks not only struck the olfactories of the men agreeably, but aroused a deep interest and expectation of a half dozen hounds lying down and looking on from a respectful distance.

The turkey hunt at the early day dawn, the later drive for deer, and the still hunt by torch light by night, had all been successful in the past two days, as could be seen by several of the great birds, the form of a doe, while two bucks swung by their heels from forks of trees had their branching antlers almost to touch the ground.

It was early in the spring; the mosquito

pest time had not commenced; while mornings and nights had such a chill in the air as to make the warmth of the camp fire most agreeable to our hunters, who sat awaiting with keen appetites the announcement of supper.

Tin cups and plates formed the cut glass and silver ware of the feast; and hunger, sharpened to a keen edge by exercise in the open air, made a sauce far ahead of any condiment prepared by man. But fortunately there was superabundance for all, dogs included, and as Dave, one of the servants said:

"Dar was plenty moh whar dis come fum."

There was much cheerful conversation as the meal proceeded, and laughter as well, over the incidents and accidents of the day.

Pipes were then pulled out, cigars lighted and gradually a thoughtful pause fell on the group, while the woods began to whisper in the night-wind, the cane brake stirred, and the palmettoes rustled their fan-like leaves a moment out in the deep shadows and then would stop, as if listening to the men talking around the fire.

Of course amid the dark spectral woods all around; and in the heart of a great, softly sighing wilderness, the inevitable question would at last be propounded:

"Who believes in ghosts"?

The instant that Major LeGrange, with his solemn and deliberate way of speaking uttered these words, the two negro men, Dave and Daniel cried out simultaneously:

"Laws-a-Mussy!"

And while the former peered into the gloom across the bayou, the other glanced uneasily backward at one of the before-mentioned road-like vistas that began not far from the camp, followed a straight course for fully fifty yards, then swerving to the left, vanished and ended in the blackness of the woods.

The white men all laughed at the exclamation of the servants; but not the less did several of them take hasty glances out into the surrounding shadows, as though they expected to see a fearful face peering at them from behind a tree, or a startling form flitting toward the group from down one of the narrow star lighted glades.

Why is it that when such a question is asked, especially at night, that a kind of creepy crawly sensation steals up the spinal column and distributes itself even to the roots of every hair on the head? Now let the query be propounded not only at night, but in the midst of sighing forests miles away from human habitations, and no sound but the hoot of a distant owl, and see if the inquiry will not produce a sudden, accelerated beating of the heart, accompanied with some peculiar difficulty of regular breathing.

"Curtis," said LeGrange, addressing the lawyer from Yazoo City, while he knocked the ashes out of the bowl of his merschaum pipe, refilled it with Kilikinick tobacco and lighted it with a coal from the fire;

"Suppose we all tell a story of strange, uncanny, ghastly things that have happened to us personally at some time in our lives; and you begin rolling the ball."

The gentleman addressed as Curtis smiled and said:

CURTIS' STORY.

"My life has been a busy and prosaic one and I have nothing to relate of an actual su-

pernatural character, and that properly deserves to be ranked among real ghost stories. Still, "he added as he removed his cigar from his mouth," there was an occurrence which took place some twenty years ago when I was about twenty-five years old, that certainly gave me, for the time being, a very great shock."

"I had been visiting some friends several miles away in the country, and on leaving them after eleven o'clock at night and going out to the front gate where I had left my horse hitched, found that he had slipped the bridle and departed, doubtless for his livery stable abode in town.

"I could easily have secured another steed from the family I had just parted with, but not wishing to disturb them, or the servants at such a late hour, and being strong, healthy and fond of walking, I concluded to return on foot.

"The night was moonless, and very cloudy. A fitful wind was blowing, now roaring through the branches of the leaf stripped

trees, now dying away in a sighing tone, and still again dashing my face with a sprinkle of rain, as if the sob of nature had been followed by a gush of tears.

"I walked with a quick step, first thinking of the pleasant company I had just left, and later running over in mind a brief of some coming case, and had made two miles successfully and without interruption, when, arousing from thought, I found myself approaching the cemetery, which is located just one mile from town. I had to pass on the high road in twenty feet of the white gate, which opened into the silent abode of the dead. Owing to the blackness of the night the grave yard itself was barely discernible, but the latticed portal, being nearer, was plainer to view.

• "Glancing in that direction as I was going by, I saw a white form on the inside of the enclosure leaning against the gate and looking at me over the top panel, which was nearly five feet from the ground.

"I need not tell you that the shock was great and that for moments my heart seemed to stand still. But when in another in-

stant there came a strange, low moan from the spectral object looking at me, my horror was increased beyond words to describe.

"With sheer force of will I determined to investigate, and turned towards the entrance when a dash of rain full in my face caused me to stop a moment to wipe the blinding drops from my eyes; and as I looked again, the midnight visitor was gone.

"Walking up to the gate with no little excitement and apprehension, and peering through the gloom down the holly tree lined drive, or avenue, I saw, fully fifty yards away, the faint outline of a form in the remote shadows.

"Summoning up every power of my being I climbed over the locked gate and advanced towards the misty looking object in the distance. Again it melted from view; and again dimly appeared on a side walk that ran at right angles from the central road. As I walked rapidly towards the apparition, suddenly it vanished, and on my reaching the spot where I had last beheld the uncanny object stand, I could see nothing but an ar-

ray of marble slabs and tombstones standing spectrally about in the darkness.

"Just before me about fifteen feet away was a newly made grave. As my eyes fell upon it, suddenly a great, white form arose from it, and gave a blood curdling, heart breaking kind of cry!"

Curtis paused, and the breathless silence in which he was gazed at by the other five, showed how profoundly his narrative had moved them all.

At last Lester, the merchant, said, as if unable to bear the suspense:

"What on earth was it Curtis?"

The lawyer thus addressed, carefully applied a match to his extinguished cigar, and, after a few whiffs, replied in a quiet voice:

"It was a very large, white New Foundland dog!"

There was a volley of "Oh's" and "Ah's" from the white men, and a fusillade of "Hehs!" "Hunhs!" "My Lands!" and "De Lawd-a-Musseys" from the two negroes. Then Curtis in answer to interrogating eyes and lips, said:

"The newly made mound contained the body of the dog's master, who, I found later,

had been buried that morning. The faithful animal returned to the grave from the house after the funeral; and in its instinctive way, went to the portal at midnight looking for help for his buried friend and owner; and standing with its fore feet on the top bar of the gate, gave the indistinct moan I heard and mistook in the gusty wind. Evidently in its two disappearances in the cemetery, the dog was leading me on, and finally crouched behind the earth hill of the grave, waited for my arrival. Seeing me stand still, it leaped up and gave the dismal howl that I thought in my agitation was a cry."

All applauded the story and LeGrange, smoothing his brown beard, said, it was a striking narrative and deserved to be ranked in the best class of ghost lore and literature.

Ludlow, the other Cotton Planter, a cultivated gentleman and a man of known courage proved in several desperate encounters for which he was not responsible, remarked gravely:

"You had more nerve, Mr. Curtis, than I believe I should have possessed. I think I would have remembered some pressing en-

gement at home when I saw the ghost at the gate looking at me and moaning."

"Ef dat had bin me" broke in Dave," when dat white thing riz up and busted outen dat grave, I'd ur died plum daid right den an' dar."

There was a laugh over Dave's honest confession, when LeGrange, turning to his servant said:

"Dave, can't you give us a ghost story"?

The young negro man scratched his head meditatively as well as apologetically and replied:

"Marse Ed, I ain met up wid no ghoses myself yit, and I sholy do hope ter de Lawd dat I nuvver will. Whuffur I want ter see a gho's! I jes nachully would drap daid in my tracks ef I seed one. Naw suh I ain look-in' for no sech, an' I ain gwineter look fur no spooks an' sperits. You done huyrd me say so. But I kin tell you a story bouten how de devil got ole Uncle Lige Johnson, whut belongst to Col. Middleton on de Azoo River."

"All right, Dave," said the others, "tell us about that": and every eye was fixed in amused interest on the negro.

The servant cleared his throat several times in evident enjoyment of his position as an entertainer of four prominent and wealthy white men, and began:

DAVE'S STORY.

"Lige Johnsin, Marse Ed, was a nigger preacher, and he was a mighty one on de rousements ob ligion an' de fires ob torment. I've seed de floh ob de chu'ch plum kivered wid people squallin an' cryin' w'en he brung out de pale hoss ob Rebelation, and oncapped de Pit, an' let de brimstone loose.

"Oh Yes, Preacher Johnsin was a great preacher. I hyurd him preach once boutin Balaams Ass, an' I tell you suh I could jes h'yer dat Ass er talkin'."

"I haven't a doubt of it" interjected Major LeGrange, while the other white men laughed. Dave failed to see the cause of the amusement and resumed:

"Uncle Lige Johnsin tuk a notion dat de wurl was gwineter end and dat soon, an' so all dat winter he had de cullud folks skeered haf to death lisnin' fur Gabrul to blow his trumpet.

"He would rare an' jump in de pulpit an' crack his heels, an' say:

"Dey ain none o' you ready to go but me. I'se ready I tell you. An' doan none o' you ketch hol' o' my coattails when I'm cotched up wid de angels, an' speck me ter pull you outen a burnin' wurl. Naw my frends! hit kain be did. I'se gwineter look outen fur myself dat day."

"Den all de wimmin would cry and groan, an' some ob de men would look glum an' hang day haid.

"One night two white gemmuns laid fur Preacher Johnsin. Day say dat he done got de nigger's all aroun' so flustrated bouten' de Jedgment dat day couldn' wurk in de field. So day crawl up in a high lof' ob de meetin' house whur Uncle Lige preached, and tuk a big tin bugle wid dem, an jes when preacher Johnsin was er tellin' bouten de las' day, and he was de onlys one ready fur it; one of de white gemmuns in de lof' holler out in er orful voice:

"Blow, Gabrul, Blow!"

"An' right den an' dar dat udder white

man blowed on dat horn three long, mohnful sounds! and den sech a screamin' an' groanin' an' a runnin' hyer an' a runnin' dar mungst de nigger's you nuvver see in all yoh bawndid days.

"De lights went out, an' de men scrouged an' fit fur de dohs; an' dar was Preacher Johnsin er runnin' hyer an' dodgin' dar, tryin' dis doh an dat one, doin' his bes' to git outen de house an' mek fur de woods lak de res' o' dem. He look lak he done gone plum stracted.

"Jes den he seed de window back o' de pulpit, when he flung hissef agin it an' bust it out and jumped fur de groun'. But 'stead o' litein on de groun', Uncle Lige landed straddle ob er big, ole bull, whut was er stannin' dar jes under de winder.

"Sholy dat bull was as much 'stonished as Preacher Johnsin', an' off he tuk down de road snortin' an' er bellowin' wid Uncle Lige er sittin' on his back an' holdin' on tight. An' jes as he whiz out on de big road befoh' de chuch whar ebry body seed de 'mazin sight; Preacher Johnsin' lookin' ashy in his face,

his eyes er poppin' out, an' er trimlin all over holler out:

"Lawd hev mussy! De Debbil done got me at las'! No mohn I expected"!

There was a hearty laugh all around the camp fire at Dave's purloined, ancient, moss-back story, which had doubtless served its time and generation in almost every slave state in the Union; and then Major Le Grange, loading his pipe for the third time, looked at Daniel, who was giving a kick-kick-kick kind of laugh between his teeth over Dave's narrative, and said:

"Now, Daniel, is your time."

"Who? Me! Marse Ed," exclaimed the old darkey, counterfeiting surprise, and yet unable to conceal his satisfaction.

"Yes, You. Tell us if you ever saw, heard or smelled a ghost?"

"Well, Marse Ed, I sholy hev felt an' smelt ghoses many er time as e'v'ybody has, as has bin er ridin' thu' de woods at night. Dem wahn airs you meet up wid dose times, Ole Granny Roxey Ann say, is ghoses er trablin' aroun'. But I kain say I ebber huyrd or seed er ghos'.

"De nighis I kin come ter dat whut youse

all er talkin' erbout, was when de Angel o' Death come to my cabin arter me. Does you want ter hyer bouten dat?"

"The very thing, Uncle Daniel" said the gentlemen; whereupon Daniel, taking a small stick in his hand to assist gesticulations as a kind of wand, began:

DANIEL'S STORY.

"Hit was jes erbout foh years ago. You, Marse Ed, had bin gone ter Europe two years. I had gethered my little patch o' sweet taters an' bunked 'em. I was er comin' thu de woods thinkin' how good a fat possum would go wid dem taters, when my ole dog Ring treed one right befo' my eyes. I chopped de tree down an' got de possum. Dat vahy night I had jes cooked dat same fat possum, an' had him kivvered aroun' wid sweet taters, an' de rich grease an' gravy er comin' down his sides on de taters. An' I had jes put de dish on de table wid my mouf waterin' at de sight, an' was gwine ter de far eend ob de room fur a chur; when dar comes a big thun'rin' knock at de doh.

"Who dat?" I say wid my voice er trim-

lin'; coz I try not to let de udder nigger's know I had dat possum; an' den de knock was so loud dat it sont my heart right up in de roof o' my mouf. So I say all in a trimble:

"Who dat dar at de doh?"

"An' a monstus deep voice say:

"Hits me, de Angel ob Death. Let me in!"

"An' I say, wid my hair er risin' and a bristlin':

"Whut you want, Marse Angel?"

"An' he say wid dat growlin' voice:

"I done come fur Uncle Dan'el's soul. Let me in. I've come fur you!"

"I felt de cole sweat er drappin offen me, an' I say, er shakin' all ober:

"Marse Angel, Uncle Dan'el doan live hyer no moh!"

"You liar" he say ter me, poundin' de doh; "I know bettah. Youse Uncle Dan'el yo'hsef."

"An' I say, almos' er cryin' an, ready ter drap on de floh:

"Marse Angel, an' you huyrd nuffin' tall bouten whuts come o' Uncle Dan'el?"

"No," he growled pressin' gin de doh.
"Whut erbout him?"

"Why Marse Angel, dat poh unharmlful nigger he done bin daid an' behied gwine on moh'n two weeks."

"Oh you ole liar" de angel hollered "He's right in dar now, let me at him!"

"An' he flung hissef agin de doh wid er orful bang; an' when he did dat, I jes riz an' went thu' de back winder an' lit on de groun' er flyin'. An' I tell you, suh, I run ober two fences, and brek thu briar patches an' nuvver stop runnin' 'till I come er pantin' an er blowin' to ole Brudder Zeke Green's cabin what was a preacher ob de Baptis' swasion, an' who lib dah wid his son-in-law, Pete, whut was a deacon in de chu'ch. I tell you dey was sutney 'stonished when I tumble on de floh an' tole 'em dat de Angel ob Death was in my cabin whar I bin er livin' an haivin' myself all dese years."

"Preacher Green and Pete, his son-in-law, say dey think I bin drinkin' or dreamin'. But I say, Hi! How I bin er dreamin' when I ain gone ter baid yit? An' how be in baid

when I was jes finishin' cookin' dat fat possum an' taters.

"When I mention dat supper, Brudder Green say:

"Whar dat possum an' taters now?"

"An' I say I lef 'em on de table when I brek thu de winder."

"An' den Brudder Green and Pete hang day haid and think er little, arter day huyrd bouten dat possum supper, an' den say day gwine back wid me ter my cabin ter look inter dat Angel o' Death business.

"So day tuk a blazin' pine knot an' a couple ob axes, an' we come thu de woods back o' my house an' stop to lissen. But ev'ry thing was still an' dark. Den we crep 'round in de front whar de angel med de racket; an' dar warnt no angel dar; an' I was sho' glad fur dat. But my doh was wide open whar I spec' he bust it open wid his hand; an' so Brudder Zeke Green an' Pete walked in er holdin' de torch high an' wid day axes drawed, an' me a trimlin' comin' behin' 'em. An, dar was no angel dar. An' as we look closer dar wuzzunt no possum dar nuther. Day all done gone, an' de taters too!"

"Den Brudder Pete he brek inter er big

laf an' say he nuvver knew er angel eat possum an' taters, speshully de Angel o' Death."

"An' Preacher Green, who done read haf thu de spellin' book, arter prowlin' 'roun de room an' lookin' mighty troubled bouten sumpin, say:

"Brudder Dan'el, you bin de subjick ob er practil joke."

"Hi! I say, whut you mean by dat kin' o' joke you call practil? An' he say:

"Some triflin' nigger done skeer you off fum yoh own baid an' boa'd an' sot down an eat yoh possum an' taters."

"An' I say:

"Naw, Suh, dat voice was too deep an' turbble fur enny man's voice. Hit was de Angel o' Death I tell you, an' he lef de doh open, an' de dogs got in an eat dat supper."

"An' preacher Green say:

"When did ennybody eber see a dog draw a chur to er table lak dis? An' whar you see er dog sop er plate wid a piece er bread lak dat? An' whar you know a dog eat possum meat and pile possum bones on de side o' de plate like dis?"

"Den he went on!

"Naw, suh, dis ain nuffin' tall but one o' dat rascally Yaller Bob's practil jokes. He's got jes dat deep growlin' voice you huyrd, an' he smelt yoh supper, an' he sont you er fly-in' thu der woods while he eat yoh possum an' taters!"

Dan uttered these last words with a puzzled expression of countenance, while rubbing his kinky gray hair slowly with his hand in a reflective retrospective manner. Then suddenly looking up, he said:

"Dats whut Preacher Green sayd about hit, Marse Ed: Whut do you say, an' de udder gemmens?"

There was a hearty laugh so loud and resounding over the conclusion of the story and especially at Daniel's question, that it set several owls to hooting in the woods.

Their ha-ha's and who-who's, somewhat sobered the circle, and the mirth was all gone, when Major LeGrange, addressing the merchant from Yazoo City, said:

"Col. Lester, it is now your turn."

COL. LESTER'S STORY.

"We, in the mercantile life, Major, are too busy to give attention to the matter we are talking about tonight. We have "scares," panics, drops, slumps, runs and such things, but not one of them a ghost, but something far more real and substantial.

"Personally I have never beheld one of these graveyard wanderers and midnight visitors; but last year on a business trip to a distant town I met a man who had seen one, so you must be content with a second-hand apparition in my narrative.

"I had finished my business in the place and was whileing away the hours before bed time in the hotel office, with such instrumental means as cigars, newspapers and occasional chats with one or another of the guests.

"One of these gentlemen had been often to the community before, and was able to give me much information relative to the surrounding country, crops, people, the new railroad that was approaching and other matters. While this party was speaking to

me my attention was directed to a person sitting aloof from us, bearing the appearance of being sick or in trouble, and with unmistakable evidences of some kind of dread or terror upon him which he was endeavoring with poor success to conceal.

"Seeing my eyes fixed on the man inquiringly and sympathetically, my companion said:

'The gentleman across the room had a great shock last night; and is just waiting for the stage tomorrow morning to leave this "accursed country," as he calls it, forever.'

"What was the shock?" I naturally asked.

"Oh!" replied my new acquaintance, "It has reference to a house about two miles from town. It is a good dwelling, the fruit farm connected with it can be made first class, the land is the best on the market, but the house itself has a bad name."

"What do you mean by a bad name?" I asked.

"Well, the first happening connected with it was that the man who did most to improve the place was found one morning by the

neighbors in a headless condition, stone dead on the floor of the front room. This occurred ten years ago and the head has never been found to this day, nor the murderer brought to light and justice.

"It was quite awhile before any one wanted to buy the home where such a deed of darkness had been committed; but after several years the horror of the occurrence wore off some; strangers came in, and one of them bought the farm. He spent but one night, and came into town early next morning looking like he had been sick a year. He went straight to a real estate agent and sold the place for half the amount he had given for it. He tried to escape giving an explanation for such a hurried disposal of property and departure when only the day before he was pleased with his investment and made no mention of leaving. But being urged by one, to whom he had taken a liking, he laid his hand on his shoulder just as he was stepping into the stage and said in a low, awe struck tone:

"I don't want to live in a house where after you have blown out the light and gone to

bed a man without a head will walk in and sit down in a chair with his form turned towards you as if he was looking at you!"

"The same thing has happened twice since. Strangers buy the house, stay one night, look pale and sick the next day, sell at a sacrifice, and leave the town to come back no more."

"The last occurrence of the kind took place last night. The house had been empty and the land idle for two years, when the gentleman across the office yonder arrived here seeking to invest money in a homestead. He was delighted with the value, possibilities and especially the situation of the farm. No one told him that it had the reputation of being haunted, and so he purchased it. Then buying several chairs, a table and a cot, he went out late in the afternoon of yesterday and took possession.

"Last night about one o'clock, he burst into the room here where the clerk, myself and another gentleman were sitting by the stove smoking and talking. He looked like a wild man, was deadly pale, and breathing heavily.

"We asked him what was the matter? and it was minutes before he could tell us; and then while he told us he kept glancing at the door with a look of apprehension and terror that was pitiful to see.

"He said that when night came on after going to the house, that he had a frugal supper, cleared off the table, made up the fire in the front room, and sat down to think and plan for the future. That he dropped into a slumber as he sat in his rocker and must have slept several hours; for when he awakened the fire had nearly burned down and only illumined the room with fitful gleams, alternating in these brief flashes with deeper and longer lasting shadows. He was just stooping to push together the dying embers, intending then to retire to bed, when a voice behind him spoke aloud:

"It is a cool night."

"Looking quickly around he saw a man without a head sitting in a chair not over eight feet away from him. He said an unutterable horror filled and nearly blinded as well as choked him. He thought once he would faint; but nerved to sudden exertion

he gave one wild leap through the door, another into the yard, then through the gate, and up the road he sped with all the swiftness he was capable of toward town, which was two miles away. The horrible feeling with him all the while he ran was that "The Thing" was after him; but hoping at last that by his long and rapid flight he had distanced it, if it had pursued, he, all exhausted and laboring for breath, sat down on the end of a log that was lying by the side of the road. His race had been nearly a mile.

"Breathing heavily from his violent and prolonged exertion, he felt that he must rest a few minutes, when suddenly the same quiet voice spoke near him, saying:

"That was a close race we had."

"Turning quickly, to his consternation and terror, there at the other end of the log sat a human figure with no head on its shoulders.

"Up he sprang again and rushed like a madman along the road towards town, and finally into the hotel, as I have already described.

"He has remained over today simply to

sell the property and, I understand, took one-third of what he paid for its purchase. He leaves early in the morning on the stage. The clerk tells me he will not go to bed, but sat up in the office with him the remainder of last night, and intends doing the same thing again this evening.

"I looked at the man we were discussing and discovered the poor fellow had fallen asleep with his head resting on the palm of his hand. The face looked worn, pale and sad; and it was evident that his slumber was disturbed now and then by some inner agitation of mind and heart.

"Next morning he ate no breakfast, and later took the stage for a neighboring railroad station. I saw him settle down on a back seat, then as the vehicle started, his face appeared a moment at the window, casting a backward, terror stricken glance down the road, as if he expected pursuit of some kind; and the next moment the driver popped his whip, the wheels whirled, and the stage disappeared in a cloud of dust taking with it the unhappy man from my view forever."

As Col. Lester finished, there was a profound silence for a full minute; when Major LeGrange said:

"I think I can give the true explanation of that ghost haunted house."

"What is it?" asked several voices.

"I believe," replied LeGrange, "that it was a set up trick by parties, who for some reason did not want the land to be sold."

"What do you say" interrupted Ludlow, "to the idea of the real estate agent being at the bottom of the whole affair? If he could sell the homestead at a good price one day, and buy it back almost the next morning at a discount of from thirty to fifty percent, then repeat the transaction every year or so, I can see how it paid him to keep a ghost without a head as a kind of silent working partner in his business."

All laughed at this explanation, refilled their pipes, while Daniel and Dave put fresh logs on the fire.

Major LeGrange, the recognized chairman of the night, looked across at his personal friend Ludlow, and said:

"George, we will now hear from you."

Ludlow was a man of dark hair and eyes and possessed the courtly bearing and easy grace so often beheld in the men of the old-time South. He began in a musing tone:

LUDLOW'S STORY.

"I have had some very strange things to happen in my life; but would prefer to tell you of a circumstance or piece of history in the life of my mother.

"Most of my family came from Natchez, but some of my people lived and died in Claiborne County. One of my grand-aunts owned a large and imposing looking residence which commanded a distant view of the Mississippi River. The house sat back in the midst of a great grove of forest trees of some twenty acres in extent. Just a bare glimpse could be had from the highroad of its turreted roof, broad verandahs and white pillars that towered to the height of two stories; while the drive-way to the mansion curved and wound about under timber so lofty and crowded as to be shrouded in a kind of twilight all along its length, even at the hour of mid-day.

"My Grand-Aunt, now a widow, had once a family of four sons and daughters, but the girls had married and were far away in the North. The eldest born son had been murdered in these same woods, and the second boy was a wanderer on foreign shores and never came home.

"Other sorrows came to the white-haired mistress of the mansion, and so she gradually retired from all social life, never going out herself, and receiving but few visitors.

"The house with its wide halls, broad shadowy stair-cases, and twenty empty rooms, was so stripped of life and gladness that finally visitors became still rarer; and as reports began to spread that the building was haunted, the time arrived when the belated stranger was almost the only guest. His horse would be well fed and taken care of by the hostler, and he, himself, after an excellent meal, would be conducted to one of the numerous and elegantly furnished bedrooms; yet such was the chill and emptiness of the large, echoing dining room, the gloomy stretch of halls and passages, the vista

of door ways opening in a line through library, drawing room, to remote, misty-looking parlors, and such was the awful stillness and loneliness of the whole house that no one was ever known to be a guest the second time.

"Then it was whispered that some of these wayfarers for a night had other reasons of a harrowing nature for not coming again. That they had seen and heard grewsome and even frightful things and desired no more of that kind of nocturnal experience.

"Yet, through all this, my Grand-Aunt lived and continued to abide alone for years after these events had taken place, and others that I am about to relate.

"When asked by friends and relatives if the house was haunted, she replied quietly and solemnly that she was compelled to admit that certain things took place there that she found it impossible to explain.

"So when she invited my mother and my mother's sister, who were her favorite nieces, to spend a week with her, she said in her letter to them that they must come expecting some strange happenings in the house, which she could not account for, nor prevent.

"At the last moment my mother's sister was taken sick, I verily believe with apprehension, and could not start on the carriage journey of twenty miles. So my mother departed and arrived alone.

"It was a blustering Autumn afternoon; the leaves were falling like a golden shower all over the woods, and made a royal yellow and crimson carpet for the wheels to roll noiselessly over.

"My venerable Aunt met my mother at the door of the great porch, kissed her affectionately, and sending a female servant with her to a bed room on the second floor, awaited her return in the Library, where a bright cheery fire of hickory logs blazed and sparkled on the large, brass andirons, and threw its warm light over thick carpets, rich rosewood furniture, and stately looking family portraits.

"My mother felt a sense of oppression the instant she entered the house; and the remoteness and loneliness of her apartment, with its great curtained and testered bed, dark frame mirrors, and tall solemn looking mahogany wardrobes, did not add to her

cheerfulness and courage. But in the Library, before the cozy fire, talking over family matters with her Aunt, she soon became her bright, natural self again.

"Mean time the wind had lulled and the evening shadows filling the woods began to creep towards and fall upon the house.

"It was about five in the afternoon and the two ladies were quietly conversing, when suddenly the door which led into the hall opened wide and then shut again with a loud noise.

"My mother instantly sprang to the portal, opened it, and looked up and down the broad passage and towards the wide staircase, which led to the second floor; but not a soul was in sight! It would have been impossible for the fleetest of human beings to have escaped detection, so swift had been the movement and act of my mother.

"Naturally she was much agitated, and in returning to the side of her Aunt, noticed that she had given no sign of the strange occurrence, save by an increased pallor and a profounder sadness. My mother said:

"What is that, Aunt Mary?"

And the aged woman's reply was:

"I cannot tell, for I do not know." Then bowing her face on her hands, she rocked in that position for some minutes, then quietly resumed her work of crocheting.

"Nothing else happened the rest of the afternoon. But, when supper was over my mother could not but observe that the servants seemed to hurry their work as if anxious to get out of the house and away as soon as possible. Their own cottage and log cabin homes in the yard or more distant field were small and humble; but doubtless their occupants reflected that they were abodes of peace and all the more to be desired in that they had no ghostly, supernatural visitants disturbing their tranquility by day and their rest by night.

"Do none of the servants stay here in the house all night?" asked my mother, as the two ladies returned from the dining room to the Library.

"No," was the quiet reply. "They cannot stand the strange occurrences taking place again and again; so I sleep here all alone in the house, except now and then when I have

a visitor like yourself, or some traveller asks for hospitality for a night."

"I think you are a very courageous woman," said my mother. "It is simply wonderful how you can live such a lonely life, meeting these shocks of mind and nerve so often, and yet not go down under them, or run from their cause."

"The conversation went on between the two; and they spoke of the Fox sisters, with their discovered and exposed fraudulent table rapping; the Cock Lane Ghost, which proved to be another imposition on the public; and the mysterious happenings at the Epworth Rectory, when occupied by the Wesleys, concerning which strange occurrences the godly, sensible parents of John Wesley could give no explanation, and about which the great Founder of Methodism himself, was remarkably reticent all his life.

"It was nearing the hour of midnight, and the two women were just arising to retire to their bedrooms, when heavy steps were heard walking on the floor of the room just above them.

"My Grand-Aunt said to my mother:

"The room above us is locked, the windows barred, and no human being can go in or out, such is the peculiar key and fastening. Now, we will go up together to see, as I have often done before alone."

"So taking a pistol in one hand and a Bible in the other, thus prepared for natural and supernatural beings, she approached the Library door that opened into the great central hall, with my mother clinging close to her.

"To my mother's amazement they could not stir the portal. It was not locked, but in turning the knob it was as though some kind of power held the door fast from the hall side. It was in vain they struggled unitedly with it; it would not yield. When suddenly it flew open, nearly striking them in the face, and a dreadful feeling, as if a presence had entered the room, swept over them.

"My mother said her blood seemed to turn to an icy coldness in her veins; but not daring to remain in the room with the "Presence," she quickly followed her Aunt into the hall, up the stairway to the hall above, and then toward the apartment where they had heard the sound of walking.

"As said before, the door of this bed chamber was locked. On opening it and turning the light of the lamp into the room nothing could be seen but a handsomely furnished apartment where every window was barred on the inside, and the one closet, on investigation, revealed only emptiness.

"There was nothing to do but to return to the Library, where they had hardly seated themselves, when the heavy steps were heard again in the room above, then out in the hall, next coming with a steady tread down the stairs, and then towards the Library door, which the pale faced, agitated women had closed behind them.

"In another instant the door was flung open, and the steps went deliberately across the room and stopped in front of the shrinking, trembling, terrified females, as if the "Presence" was looking at them!

"My mother at this juncture fainted dead away on the floor!

"When she returned to consciousness her head was resting on a sofa cushion or pillow, while her Aunt was bathing her face with camphor chafing her hands and trying in various ways to resuscitate her.

"Where is that dreadful Thing?" gasped my mother, turning an appalled look towards the door. Her Aunt replied:

"It has been gone an hour, and will disturb us no more tonight. Poor Child, I am sorry that you came to visit me."

"She had hardly gotten the words out of her mouth when a violent blow like a brick hurled by a powerful hand struck the side of the house.

"Leaping to their feet and running to the window nearest the sound, the women had an uninterrupted view of a broad lawn flooded with the soft moonlight, and there was not a living creature of any kind in sight.

"Closing the shutters and dropping the curtain, the Aunt and Niece rolled a sofa up near the fire, which they replenished, and sat down, both deadly pale and conversing in low tones.

"Finally my mother said: 'Aunt Mary again I have to say that I think you are a very brave woman to endure all these dreadful happenings for months and years, and all alone!'

"Remember," replied the other, "It does not happen every night. Sometimes a month goes by without a thing occurring. This time it has been three months. This was one reason I thought you and your sister might visit me. I continually hope that each outbreak will be the last. Then you have not seen and heard the worst. At first I was so exercised in mind and heart that I thought I could never stand it. But I reasoned it out that if these things were of the Devil, the God whom I love and serve, would deliver me. Or if they were from designing, wicked men, that I had equally comfortable promises in the Bible that I should be protected. In addition I felt I owed it to Society, to Morality, and to Truth, itself, not to allow evil characters to triumph in their plots and labors through womanly timidity or superstitious fears.

"What do you mean by designing men," asked my mother, laying her hand lovingly on her aunt's shoulder.

"Well, you know this is a very handsome dwelling and desirable estate; and if men who have tried repeatedly to purchase it

from me, and in vain, should endeavor in some unknown way to make the house appear as if it was haunted, and so drive me to terms, I call that designing, as well as wicked.

"My mother left next day. She could not have remained, she said, another night in a building with such frightful, unnerving things taking place both day and night.

"Her Aunt remained alone as usual; and several years later passed peacefully away to Heaven.

"Dreaded as the house was in her lifetime, after her death, when it was closed up, it became even gloomier looking, and was avoided and shunned by every one.

"It seemed to those who drove up the avenue to obtain directions about the road from the servants in the back yard; or to hunters approaching it through the woods; that it stood for some dreadful mystery; that "The Thing" which had haunted, saddened and blighted the place was looking down from the upper windows, or peering through the transoms of the hall door at them. So that they were glad to get away

from the solemn, silent mansion and move on public highways and look on brighter dwellings that had no such appearance and history.

"Meantime while the estate was rented out and cultivated, and a few servants lived in cabins in the back yard, the great house itself was closed and left solitary, with the old forest trees sighing around it, and wringing their lofty branches over its roof as if in grief and trouble over something of a dark, hopeless nature that had taken place, or was going on still within its mysterious walls.

"One night it burned down. No one ever knew how it happened, unless it was brought about by sparks from a forest fire.

"To this day the melancholy ruins can be seen with blackened pine, oak and sycamore trees and fire scroched shrubbery standing about it; while the chimneys, tall and weather stained, look like monuments towering over the grave of an ended household, a blighted home, whose members are scattered, dead, and departed forever."

Ludlow's story left the whole party, servants not excepted, in a mental state of gloom not unmixed with a feeling of fear.

As the dark eyed speaker had proceeded, chilly sensations ran through the body and tingled to the very finger tips of the bravest man of the group.

It was LeGrange's time to give a narrative, but no one asked him to begin. The nerves of all were on a kind of edge; and there was a vague uneasiness and apprehension felt, which the half-dying fire, the distant hooting of owls, the rustling palmettos stopping at times as if to listen to the weird story, and the occasional sigh of the woods around them did not tend to lessen, but deepened and intensified instead.

Curtis, the Lawyer, was about to propose going to bed and letting LeGrange off until the next evening; when suddenly Dave cried out in a loud voice and with a tone of unspeakable horror:

"My Lawd-a-Mighty! Jes look yonder!"

In the next instant Daniel screamed:

"Oh Gawd-Hev-Mussy!" and fell groveling on the ground on his face, while Dave,

with another cry of dismay and terror plunged head-foremost in the palmetto shanty and burrowed out of sight under blankets, bundles of fodder, and baggage of every description.

All the four white men on hearing the cries and beholding the action of the negroes, sprang to their feet and with varying expressions of astonishment and horror, looked in the direction where Dave had pointed his finger before he leaped out of sight. And there, hardly fifty feet distant in the starlight, in the road-like vista we have described and just this side of the place where it bent away and was lost in the darkness of the swamp, stood a skeleton of a man of gigantic height, with its ribs and teeth glittering in the firelight, while in the sockets of the white, bony head two shining eyes burned and glowered upon them.

Before the amazed and horrified men could do a thing, some kind of large body dashed behind them, went through and over the fire, scattering its embers and plunging the camp and road into a darkness all the greater because of the sudden transition

from light to blackness. At the same moment there proceeded from the Skeleton Figure a blood curdling scream and maniacal laugh.

All credit to the nerve and courage of the white men, the entire four grasping up guns and pistols plunged into the narrow glade where they had beheld the frightful spectacle; LeGrange and Ludlow firing repeatedly as they ran forward.

But on arriving at the vista bend, nothing was to be seen. Ludlow returned hastily to the camp fire, seized a brand, and waving it until the flame was restored, rushed back to the three and holding the torch aloft, peered into the remaining length of the strange roadway, and listened breathlessly for the faintest sound.

But nothing rewarded the view, and nothing was heard but the dying echoes of their own firearms in the forest, and a general hooting of owls produced by the discharge of the guns.

By and by everything became perfectly still. The palmetto fans quieted as if fallen into a deep silent expectancy. Then a night

bird gave a call, and the woods commenced sighing again.

The men, penetrating some hundred yards or more in the surrounding trees, and realizing the folly of trying to explore a canebrake where one being could easily hide from a thousand seeking him, gave up the quest, returned to the camp and with the assistance of the terrified negroes, heaped fresh logs and pine knots on the fire, and spent several additional hours of the night smoking, musing and talking to each other in undertones.

The occurrence had been so real they could not doubt it. And the ghastly figure having been beheld by all six, they could not deny the horrible appearance in the road.

When they finally retired, one of their number was left on guard, but it is questionable whether any of the remaining five closed their eyes in sleep on that memorable night.

At daybreak the hunters arose, heavy and unrefreshed, and after a hasty morning meal, packed up and rode away homewards;

leaving the embers of their 'camp fire to smolder and consume on the lonely, densely shaded banks of Tipton Bayou.

* * * *

The hunting party had disappeared through the heavy timber not more than ten minutes, when slowly and cautiously two men in striped clothes and bearing a skeleton between them, slipped out from the tangled cane brake, and made for the hunters campfire.

Placing the skeleton in a sitting position against a tree, the escaped convicts began to look around for food, which they surmised the hunters in their carelessness and hasty departure might have left. Their search was far from being a failure.

"Why here is almost a whole quarter of venison!" exclaimed one.

"And here" cried the other, is a bag of biscuit and a pot half-full of coffee. Surely those men must have been badly scared to have left so much good grub behind."

"That was certainly a lucky find of yours in the cane-brake yesterday, that skeleton of some lost hunter or trapper, and the use

you put it, to scare off that crowd from our wigwam in the cypress brake. That scream and maniacal laugh of yours couldn't be beat in a lunatic asylum. It made even my blood run cold."

"Yes," replied the second convict, "By putting some fox fire or phosphorous wood in the sockets of the eyes, and holding the skeleton up high in my arms towards the fire it looked like a giant and maybe like the Devil himself to that astonished gang. Then the yell and laugh helped. But I had no idea that four of that bunch were white men. If I had I never would have risked the thing; for white men are not so easily scared and they have a way of shooting, and that well, scared or no scared. I thought it was a pack of darkeys, and that they would leave here in a hurry and never stop running until they got back to the plantations where they belonged. And I felt sure that their reports of what they saw would make this part of the woods perfectly safe for us until time to give ourselves up and get our pardon by enlisting in the army."

The first man had been busily frying some

venison steaks on the coals of fire, and now, having finished, and dividing the bread and meat between himself and comrade, replied:

"You may well say that those white men shoot well. The only thing that saved us was one of their horses taking fright at the skeleton, breaking his halter and knocking the fire out as he dashed away. Quick as we were to slip in the cane-brake some of their rifle balls whistled mighty close to us; and but for the echo of their guns, the hooting of the owls, and their own loud talking at first, they must have heard us as we crawled away through the cane with that skeleton yonder, which you had tied up so well with leather strings and thongs to hold it together and keep it from rattling."

"That's so," rejoined the second man, "and I don't know that we can afford to stay here another week, as we had expected. Those white men are going to think the matter over and are certain to come back and ferret it out. And it will never do for them to run us down with bloodhounds and catch us before we take advantage of the proclamation of the governor and voluntarily sur-

render ourselves to the authorities and get mustered into service. One of these days when I have redeemed myself in this Civil War that has broken out, I shall find some of these parties, make a clean breast of it, and tell them of the Skeleton Scare we put upon them."

The first convict agreed to the suggestion of an immediate departure from the swamp to the hills. And so after bundling up the remnants of the food, they vanished from view in the dark forest on their way first to their shanty in the heart of a cypress brake, and then ultimately to safer regions in the northern part of the county.

Meanwhile the skeleton was left leaning against the trunk of a neighboring tree, with the phosphorescent gleam still in its eyes, and sat apparently gazing into the dull yellow stream that flowed sluggishly past, as if waiting for some lone hunter or lost traveler to come along and discover, with a shock, the mystery of the Ghost of Tipton Bayou.

**A CONVERSATION
IN HADES**

A CONVERSATION IN HADES

Opening Scene.

(A human spirit flying as if pursued, knocks at the black portals of Hell. The doorkeeper emitting brimstone fumes from his mouth appears, and the conversation or dialogue begins):

(Spirit) "Let me in".

(Doorkeeper) "What brings you here?"

(S) "Desperation."

(D) "But what was your sin?"

(S) "Nothing special—I had a scolding wife."

(D) "You cannot come in here."

(S) "Why not pray?"

(D) "We have nothing worse to offer you than that you have had already. Besides"—

(S) "Besides what?"

(D) "The Devils have held a conclave, and agreed that it would be wrong and unjust to give a man another Hell, when he has already had one on earth."

(S) "But your Hell will not be as bad as the one I left, and so it will be a relief."

(D) "That may be true, but Devils have some sense of justice and some pity; and they say they could take no pleasure in tormenting a man who lived ten, twenty or thirty years with a scolding wife. They declare they would feel so mean and despiseable that they could never lift up their heads again."

(S) "But I am used to being in Hell."

(D) "Yes but we could not make things as lively for you as you had them once in your own house. You would soon feel the difference, and would be betrayed into making reflections on us. We once had a man here who did that very thing, and in the midst of our scoloped and gilt-edged torment, he would smile and say:

"You just wait 'till Sairy Ann gets here, and she will show you what real Simon Pure Torment is!

"Well, sir, that man got us all so nervous, and me so terrified that for months I was afraid to go to the Entrance Gate when a new woman appeared. And what is more, if at the time of one of these female arrivals, someone had yelled—"Sairy Ann!"—I verily believe that the whole crowd of us would have taken to our heels, and Beelzebub himself would have come near breaking his neck in getting off his throne and running.

"No sir, your arguments won't do: There is no place here for you."

(S) "But what must I do?"

(D) "Go to Heaven! They will let you in there as soon as you tell your story."

(S) "But I have lost my religion through my wife, and am a backslider."

(D) It doesn't matter. You will do no harm up there. Nobody will be afraid of you. No man who has been henpecked and scolded and treated as you have been, will ever be dangerous in Heaven. Get off with you quick; your very appearance makes me feel like weeping, and if I were seen with tears in my eyes I would lose my position here forever. Step off lively now! You are

blocking the way! Make room there for another man. Goodbye. I know they will give you a lofty seat in the Glory world. Then remember this for your comfort; there is no marrying or giving in marriage in Heaven."

(S) "That's so. I had forgotten that. I thank you sweet Devil for that last thought."

(D) "You are welcome. Farewell."

(S) "Pardon me before I go; but grant me another word. I see that last man has gone in and you have a few minutes to spare me. Tell me, do all men go to Heaven who have had scolding wives."

(D) "Not all. For some of these women repent and go to Heaven, and when their husbands hear that, they prefer coming to Hell; and therefore many got in here because of this before we made the new law I told you about. Then other men when informed of the separation of the sexes in Hell do not mind coming here to live with us."

(S) "And are the sexes kept apart in the Infernal World? You astonish me!

(D) "Yes, the men are kept on what is called the Mainland, and the women are di-

vided up in what is known as the Continent and the Five Islands."

(S) "You interest me. Please explain."

(D) "I will do so cheerfully, though I must be brief, as we are looking for a large arrival today, through the wreck of a Sunday Excursion Train, and the breaking in of the floor of a Political Convention Hall. So speak quickly, what would you like to know of me."

(S) "I wish to be informed as to the mode of punishment dealt out to women in Hell, and why the sexes are separated?"

(D) "I will tell you, but for the reasons just given will have to be brief."

(S) "I appreciate your—"

(D) "Step inside the door here, and hold your palaver. Stand now by the bank of this vast grey sea, which stretches away yonder to that black lightning-riven horizon. You are standing on the Mainland, where the men are kept. Now look away to the left, and do you see a rocky island the first of a group of four?"

(S) "Yes."

(D) "Well that is filled with women who

railed against men and marriage, calling the first brutes, and the second a degrading custom and institution.

"The island next to it on the left is peopled with females who advocated woman's rights.

"The one still farther to the left is crowded with old maids who never had an offer of marriage. The fourth and most distant of the cluster has a population of widows who wanted to marry the second time, but died without the realization of their hope. Do you see them all?

(S) "Yes perfectly."

(D) "Now look at that vast bleak coast on the right, against which the waves are pounding, and sending up their bitter spray. That body of land though really an island, yet because of its Australian size, has been called the Continent. It is overflowing with women who were scolding wives. Do you see that also?"

(S) "Certainly. It is undoubtedly large enough to be seen."

(D) "True, it is large, but it is densely populated. Now look at a point midway be-

tween the Continent and the group of four islands and you will see what is called Fifth, or Beauty Island. Of this I will speak again in a minute, telling you who live there. I suppose you see it."

(S) "Yes, and it is the loveliest in shape and appearance, of the five."

(D) "That is true. Now take this field glass and look carefully over the Continent and you will notice that the shores are lined with women, and they are all looking this way at the men on the Mainland."

(S) "Yes-Yes-Yes-I see them doing so!! But what is their torment?"

(D) "You earthborn dolt and idiot! Don't you see that the women's suffering on the Continent arises from this everlasting separation from their victims of former days, the men. This fact drives them to frenzy."

"Once a million or more of them crowded out on that prominent Headland over there, and raised a screech of defiance at the men over here; but they were so far off that it sounded like the distant cry of a sea gull. All the men laughed and could have hugged the Devil."

"When the women through their glasses saw the men's amusement and evident joy, they screeched again in fury and got to fighting among themselves."

(S) "But what about the dwellers on the four islands: what is their suffering?"

(D) "Well sir, you are about the biggest blockhead I ever met, and I have seen a number of no ordinary fools. Did your wife's treatment make you stupid or were you born so?"

(S) "I was considered gifted until I got mar—"

(D) "Oh well, don't get to sniffing and snuffling around here; take this glass and look carefully at the Continent. Your wife may be over there now. Look and see if she has arrived."

(S) "Not for the World!"

(D) "Well! well! well! She did have you scared, I must say."

(S) "Scared isn't the word. She, that is Mandy got me so unstrung in life, that a crash of thunder never gave me as great a nervous shock, as did her thin sharp voice speaking suddenly to me."

(D) "Poor fellow, how you tremble. Here sniff some of this brimstone to revive you. She shall not get you."

(S) "But you said she might be over there on the Continent; and if so, she must have passed close by us. Do you reckon she did?"

(D) "I don't know. I was talking to you, and turned the gate over to the Second Keeper. She may have gone through then. Take some more of these fumes in your nostrils. You look like you are going to faint."

(S) "Faint! Did you know that I killed myself on earth to get away from her?"

(D) "I am not surprised, for many do so. But you men do amuse us Devils a lot."

(S) "How?"

(D) "What makes you call the women Heaven's best gift to man; the gentler sex; man's guiding star; the white handed angel of mercy, and all that stuff. One of your poets wrote that Eden was a wild, until the first woman smiled. And yet, you know she was the first sinner as she was the first woman, and got all of you in a world of trouble. Then you yourself made a College Commencement address once to a hall filled

with women, and you plastered them so thick with fulsome eulogiums that you made us all sick here in Hell. What makes you men such hypocrites."

(S) "It seems to me that you are the one who lacks sense now. The whole thing is done to keep peace."

(D) "Well, what makes you marry them?"

(S) "Most of us were badly fooled."

(D) "Did the woman you call "Mandy" fool you?"

(S) "Please don't mention her any more. I just can't stand it. I only know I must have had no sense when I married her, and I certainly have had none since."

(D) "What kind do you mean; sense in the head, or cents in the pocket."

(S) "I mean both."

(D) "Well you men may say what you will about us Devils, but in one thing we have shown our wisdom over you, and that is we have always steered clear of the matrimonial rock."

(S) "That's just the reason that many of us would rather come to Hell and be with

you Devils, than live on earth in a smaller but more intolerable place of torment."

(D) "But what if Mandy should insist—"

(S) "Please do not mention Amanda anymore; but tell me about the torment of the Four Islands."

(D) "If you take a peep through the telescope at Widow's Island, Old Maids' Island, and no Marriage Island, you will observe that the rocks and hills are covered with females, who are all the time looking through glasses at this place, the Mainland. Many you notice are busy wiping away the tears from their eyes."

(S) "I see them! Oh how pitiful!"

(D) "If you look again, you will see that the women in no Marriage Island weep as much as they do in the Old Maids' and Widow's Island. In other words, all their talk against matrimony was mere rot. Marriage in your race or order of beings, was not only a law written on stone, but founded in your mental and physical constitution, and yet they pretended it was wrong, unnatural and dreadful. And now they are condemned to live with, and by themselves, and feel eternally the lack of an intellectual and physical

complementing and supplementing part, that is resident only in the opposite sex."

(S) "But what about those on Woman's Rights Island?"

(D) "Their suffering arises from the fact that they have no men to listen to their public harangues and wholesale abuse of the masculine gender. So they are compelled to hear one another. Turned loose upon themselves with no men anywhere around to arraign and accuse as the author of their troubles and downtrodden condition, their lectures seem to lack salt, flavor, inspiration, or something; and so it is hard to tell who are the greatest martyrs over there, the speakers who are appointed to deliver the old time tongue lashing; or the audience doomed to listen to the wearying, sickening, endless repetition of platitudes, or forced to applaud mere rounded periods of windy nothings where freshness is unknown, and only venom and heaviness and tediousness remain."

(S) "But what about the torment of the men on the Mainland?"

(D) "I will show you. Look here again at the island which you thought to be the

most beautiful, and which is called Beauty Island."

(S) "Yes, I remember."

(D) "Well, there dwell the women who died unsaved, but who loved the men, and whom the men loved. The torment of your sex is in peering through telescopes and seeing from afar these fair and beautiful women, who cared for them and who in turn commanded their affection and ardent devotion."

"If you will look up and down the shore you will see millions of men perched on crags and standing on promontories, gazing through their glasses and waving their hands toward that island which is the least distant of the five."

(S) "Well, that is truly dreadful."

(D) "So said Mark Antony, Henry the Eighth, Napoleon Bonaparte, Beau Brummel, Byron, and a number of others when they arrived. But it is the case just the same."

(S) "But is there no communication whatever between Beauty Island and the Mainland?"

(D) "None at all, save by telescope."

(S) "Is there no amelioration of anguish in some way?"

(D) "O yes; the men know that if the Beauty Island citizens cannot come to them, neither can the dwellers on the Continent or those on the Four Islands."

(S) "Do the men suffer as much as the women?"

(D) "In some respects there is a difference; for when the women on the Continent and Four Islands looking through their field glasses, see the men all gazing through their telescopes at the Females on Beauty Island, they scream, shriek, pull each other's hair, scratch and bite one another, and fall down in paroxysms."

(S) "Well, all this is truly wonderful. I had no idea that the Devil had such a grim spirit of justice in him."

(D) "Yes, he is supposed to have suffered himself away back yonder somewhere. And he always insists that Eve lied about the Fall in the Garden."

(S) "So poor lost men have a streak of pleasure given them by being allowed to gaze

upon Beauty Island with its population of lovely and loving females."

(D) "Yes, but they have a far greater joy than that."

(S) "What is it?"

(D) "The knowledge that the women on the Continent can never cross over and get them again."

(S) "Yes, that is blessed indeed!"

(D) "Certainly it is. But one day, Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! I can never think of it without laughing. Wait a minute until I blow this sulphur out of my nose. One day as I was saying, a man of your sort was up on that high rock on the Main Coast Line, sweeping the sea with his glass, when he thought he saw the women on the Continent embarking in boats and rowing this way. He yelled to the crowd below what was happening, and you never saw the like in all your life as to excitement and confusion. There was a panic and stampede among the men that astonished the oldest Devils in Hell. The crowd rushed over Gloomy Hill yonder, crossed Despair Valley, swam Red

Hot Lake, and hid themselves in the Midnight Mountains."

"How Apollyon did laugh at the sight! He sent a Regiment of Imps on their trail to tell them it was all a mistake; that he had fixed seas and boundary lines so that Woman Righters and Scolding Wives could never get at the men again.

"When they heard this, they crept back looking cheap and foolish but still very much frightened."

(S) "I had no idea that the Devil had any idea of fun or sense of humor."

(D) "You don't know him. He has a keen appreciation of the ridiculous. You ought to hear him take off the preachers when they have proved in their sermons that there is no such thing as a personal Devil in the universe. You would die laughing.

"He said that once he sat on the altar rail, listening to a leading preacher disproving his existence. That it made him feel quite queer to hear philosophy, science and logic all brought in to oust him not only from the world, but out of being itself. Suddenly he sprang up and said to himself I will make

that man take all this back and admit my personality and presence in fifteen minutes. So out he skipped, changed the course of the wind, and had the congregation coughing and sneezing all over the house. He next tickled the leg nerves of the elderly and made them fidgetty, got the young people into irreverent snickering, caused drowsiness to come upon some prominent pew holders, and wound up his attack by clogging the brain and stiffening the tongue of the preacher. In another minute the minister who had been contending for minutes against all these disturbing conditions, suddenly cried out in a tone of vexation and even anger: 'It seems to me that the Devil is certainly here today.'

"How we all laughed when Lucifer told us this story one day in a great gathering.

"Oh yes! Satan has a fine sense of humor, and when he isn't mad, or has worked off some of his bad feelings by sticking red hot harpoons into men, he is very genial, and greatly enjoys a joke.

"I remember that after one of the scared men saw him laughing at the stampede I have described, and heard him explain how

impossible it was for the women on the Continent ever to get at the men on the Mainland, that the man in a fit of gratitude clapped Apollyon on the back and called him a 'Hunk-a-Dory!'

"My! how Lucifer laughed at that, and said in reply: 'Just now you were slapping the ground with your feet because you thought you saw a Dory, and now you are slapping my back with your hands because you think I am a Dory.'

"Ah yes, The Old Boy enjoys a joke now and then."

(S) "Were the scolding women really coming across the Sea after the men?"

(D) "Yes; they had picked up a lot of elastic weeds, wove them into skeleton frames, daubed them with clay, and stretched their garments about them, making a frail kind of boat; and put to sea. But Lucifer, you know, is the Prince of the Power of the Air, and he raised a storm, which tumbled their cockle shells over, knocked them to pieces on the rocks, and rolled the women, screaming and wailing, back on the tide to the shore."

(S) "I have but one more question to ask you!"

(D) "Say on."

(S) "If when I go from here to Heaven, and find that Amanda has repented and is up there, can I have a bunk here in hell?"

(D) "I have already told you that its against our rules to do such a thing. But as we have made some exceptions, in a number of peculiar sad suicides, we will try to extend this courtesy to you."

(S) "You not only relieve me by saying this, but you delight me. But let us understand each other. That body of scalding water between the Mainland and the Continent, is not wide enough to suit my notions, if Amanda is over there. I know Amanda; and I tell you that boiling foaming sea, broad as it is, would be nothing for her to cross if she got her dander up.

"So, if Amanda comes here, I shall go to Heaven and bid you an eternal farewell. But if she ascends to live with the angels, then look out for me here at once. I shall instantly return to this place, to take up my peaceful and happy abode with you inhabitants of the infernal regions, forever."

A MISUNDERSTOOD MAN

A MISUNDERSTOOD MAN

I.

Clear Lake lay outspread in quiet beauty in the light of the setting sun. A sail rigged skiff made a slanting white rent in its purple mantle. On the west bank a long curving sweep of cypress trees fringed the shore as far as the eye could reach. On the east at intervals of a mile or more, plantation homes with their attendant array of negro cabins and broad intervening fields of corn and cotton approached the waters edge as if meditating a plunge in the waves.

A tin bugle calling the hands from work sounded faintly, while the notes mellowed by distance seemed like a requiem to the departed day. Near the timber line a negro

was calling hogs from the depths of the swamp with the plaintive cry so well known in the South. It went echoing on its way across the Lake only to be caught up and flung back by the dark forest which lined the opposite shore. A gun was fired in the woods. Then came the tinkle of a remote cow bell; and later the voice of some one driving cattle in the field.

After a while the Lake began to indulge in some of her coquettish ways; and having worn first a morning robe of blue, and then an afternoon gown of silver gray, she now put on a pink evening dress, and commenced receiving attentions from a thousand stars that were casting tremulous glances of admiration upon her.

As the flirtation went on the owls broke into laughter in the shadowy woods, a mocking bird warbled from a pendant vine, a negro man came up the dusky road singing a hymn, while lights from distant homes twinkled along the misty line of the darkening shore.

One of these lights streamed from a dwelling which surrounded by a grove of oak and

been was not fifty yards from where the waves were rippling against the shelving bank. It was one of the many wide porched broad halled and white pillared homes for which the Southland is distinguished.

Its present owner and occupier was Fred Stanley a bachelor of twenty-eight years. With such an occupant, it is not to be wondered at, that the house had something of that neglected air which is certain to appear from the absence of the hand and presence of a woman.

Rumor however was very busy at this time, to the effect that a female head would soon be introduced to the Stanley mansion; that this fact accounted for the recent addition of a wing, and the extraordinary amount of painting, plastering and general improving now being received by the building.

Report also said that the fair one had captured Stanley while he was on a business trip to Yazoo City, and that she was a remarkably handsome girl of nineteen with black hair and eyes, and looked and walked like a queen. Just how the gossipers had discovered the peculiar appearance and locomotive

powers of feminine Royalty does not appear, inasmuch as none of them in their travels had ever seen a foreign country, and the greater number had never been farther than the counties of Holmes and Yazoo.

To all this floating talk our young bachelor listened with a smiling countenance, only saying "Perhaps so," and "Maybe so" and "Wait and see."

There was another bit of news, which of course was not repeated to Stanley, to the effect that Blanche Osmond, the young lady in question, had another admirer beside himself who stood so high in her favor, that it was quite a while before she decided to give up her impecunious suitor and take instead the wealthy young Mississippi planter. People wondered if it was so, but no one had the hardihood to ask the man with the clear cut face and determined brow, if such had been the case. If it was true, Stanley never mentioned the fact to his nearest friend.

He was not a man given to being confidential with everybody, though by nature he was sunny spirited, and open hearted. Social in his habits, yet trained in a Military Aca-

demy, bereaved of his parents before he was twenty, and living much per force to himself on his plantation, he had by education, an unsought solitariness, and business habits, learned some most profitable lessons on the lines of reticence and self-control.

His soldierly bearing and resolute face, set off with a tawny moustache and short sharp pointed chin beard made him in appearance a man that a regiment would confidently have followed as a leader in a battle charge. In the social circle, this same handsome countenance and princely carriage not only attracted glances of admiration from women, but brought upon him as well the approving looks of his own sex.

He fought valiantly in the Civil War first as a Captain and finally as a Colonel. When the Surrender took place, his two hundred slaves were set free; but he had his large landed estate left, and this with its rentals and sub-rentals brought him in an income of ample nature.

The night just spoken of he had finished his supper, and tilted back in a rocker on the

spacious verandah with a briar root pipe in his mouth, was looking at the star lighted beauty of the Lake spread before him, and later giving numerous directions to Joe, his negro Driver as that overseer of field hands is called in the South. The man stood leaning against the steps, hat in hand, ejaculating "Yes Sah!" and "Naw Sah!", and getting his periodic responses wonderfully mixed up and confounded as the conversation proceeded.

Joe in time gave way to Millie the colored housekeeper and waitress in the bachelor domicile. She was attired in the regulation red handkerchief turban, blue cottonade dress and white apron. Fond of Stanley who had formerly owned her, yet at the present moment she was quite perturbed in mind at the prospect of a new mistress arriving and ousting her from the domestic throne where she had so long reigned, and the bringing in of some negro damsel from the city to take her place. In fact she so expressed herself.

"I spec' yoh new wife gwine to be so monstus fine, dat she kain stan' me an' my ole man Sandy rounst her."

"My new wife," said Stanley looking up with a smile, "I never had an old one, or any other kind yet to my knowledge, so how can I have a new one?"

"Oh you knows Mars F'ed whut I mean. You neenter badger me dat way jes kase Ise a poh ignunt nigger. I jest axin you kase I wants to know whut kin she do bouten yoh aigs an' coffee? Foh she ketch on you done bin starved."

"You need not be afraid Millie; I heard her say that she could not bear to keep house, and so you will have it all your own way."

"Hunh!" grunted the spoiled servant, "whut she spec' to do den! Is she gwine to hol' her hans an' order me an' Sandy an' all de res' ur us niggers aroun'?"

Stanley flicked with his finger the white ash from the bowl of his pipe, and with a partly amused, partly worried air said firmly:

"You just attend to your own business about the house Millie as you are employed to do, and there will be no trouble at all about the other matters."

The sound of the iron in her master's voice, brought the servant to herself at once as it had frequently done before; and she went off humming a mournful sounding hymn, a custom almost invariable with the negro woman when non plussed and taken aback in any way.

For quite awhile after Millie left, Stanley sat in his rocker buried in meditation which evidently from the expression of his face was of a very pleasing character.

The woman's question had naturally brought back to his mind the history of his acquaintance and engagement to Blanche Osmond. He recalled how when walking one evening with a friend on Broadway in Yazoo City, he had first met her. He bore away the impression of a pair of fine dark eyes and a superb figure. His friend told him she was from a town in southern Louisiana.

Not expecting to see her again, yet two hours later upon entering the parlor of a family he knew, she rose up with the rest to greet him. She was attired in a dress of rich crimson that became well her brunette beau-

ty; and this time as he looked at the stately girl with her snow white hand resting on a rose wood table, he felt with a thrill at the heart, that any man would be fortunate indeed to secure such a woman for his wife.

Before he left that night he had to acknowledge to himself that for the first time in his life he was deeply in love.

He made repeated visits from his plantation to town, sent his charmer presents of books, music and flowers with the inevitable box of choice candy, and in two months time was an accepted suitor.

While Blanche had a half dozen admirers, there was but one who could really have been called a rival. George Varley was about Stanley's age, of a good Mississippi family, and had come recently to Yazoo City to practice law. He dressed well, talked well, and was sought after in every kind of social entertainment. He was a man that women called fascinating. With but few exceptions the gentler sex of the town admired him. When his face was in repose, his heavy drooping black moustache assisted in giving him a pensive air which was quite captivat-

ing to some of his female friends. In addition he possessed a soft low confident kind of laugh which would be hard to describe, and that not a few disliked to hear without being able to tell exactly why.

Concerning his temporal circumstances, Varley frankly stated that he had nothing; that he would like to marry, but could not, as he was unable to keep a wife in that comfort and luxury which he thought was due a woman.

The four months visit of Blanche Osmond was drawing to a close. In ten days more she would take a steamboat for Vicksburg and then down the Mississippi to her home on the Coast. Stanley in a month's time was to follow, and bring her back a bride.

There had been several things about his fiancée which had somewhat disturbed the young planter. One was the self collected way in which she had accepted his offer of marriage. Second her remark already quoted about housekeeping; and still another speech made by her one evening in the home circle where she was staying. The family were speaking about the marriage of girls to

poor men, when she was asked what she thought about it. Her quick reply as if surprised out of some habitual caution was:

"My father is a struggling lawyer with a large family. From my childhood I have heard nothing but the cry of 'hard times' and the necessity of economy. Our home life was one of constant pinching to make ends meet. Our shoes were patched and half soled, and our dresses turned again and again. My soul fairly sickened over these things, and as I grew up I determined never to marry any but a rich man."

"But suppose you loved a poor man," asked a lady boarder in the family.

"I would not marry him," hotly replied the girl with a quick impatient tap of her pretty foot on the floor.

"Would you marry a rich man without loving him?" pursued the same questioner with a thoughtful anxious look on her face.

A kind of heart tempest seemed to sweep over the young woman, and her voice was full of suppressed feeling, and her eyes had a smoldering fire burning in them as she rejoined:

"I certainly would! Why not? He has his capital in money, and mine I am told is my beauty. Why not put the two together? He wants mine, and I need his. No, I would never marry a poor man."

Stanley came in unannounced while this last speech was being made, and stood in the door way a silent listener. He thought he had never seen her look as handsome, and yet her words filled him with a nameless pain and foreboding.

At the same moment she looked up and saw him. Her face crimsoned, but with perfect self possession she greeted him with such a fond glad look and warm pressure of the hand, that his heart pang was all gone in a moment.

A fourth matter which disturbed him was that whenever Varley was present, while Blanche would redouble her attentions to her accepted lover and say but little to the other, yet she would show at times an uneasiness not to say agitation that was unaccountable. Once he caught her looking furtively at Varley who serene as a May morning sat near the window stroking his mous-

tache and smiling benevolently at the flower garden outside.

Stanley however was the soul of honor; and the intrusion of every suspicion would be met with an instant rejection as being unworthy of himself, and an insult to the woman whom he loved with his whole heart.

For nearly an hour the young planter had been lost in reverie, his rocker was still, and a cigar which he had lighted was held forgotten between his fingers. The woman's queenly beauty was in the ascendant, and his thoughts had become not only pleasant, but tender, as could be seen by the smiling lines about the mouth.

The clock from a mantel within was striking eight when he heard the galloping of a horse on the Lake shore road, a slam of the big gate, and a moment later Sandy, his valet, hostler and general help, put in an appearance at the steps with a package of mail in his hand.

"Mars Fred hyers er bundle er papers jes put offen de boat dis ev'nin Sah, as she was gwine up Sah. Mr. Bentley at de Landin' say

de Cap'n tole him dat one dah was veh'y importun'."

Stanley took the package and walked into his lighted room to examine the parcel. The apartment was a typical bachelor's den. A handsome fishing rod was over the mantel, a rifle and fowling piece leaned in one corner, while a hillock of boots and shoes uprose in another. A large round table stood in the center of the room containing writing materials, some books and newspapers, a box of cigars, a sack of smoking tobacco, several kinds of pipes and a porcelain match case, Behind his trunk under the bed, and back of the wardrobe and bureau were a remarkable assortment of slippers, bootjacks, blacking brushes, walking canes, buggy whips, spurs and other things too numerous to mention. These treasures Millie had been commanded not to touch, on pain of instant excommunication from the house, and the installment of another African dame to take her place. So all she dared to do was to keep the sacred articles dusted, while relieving herself as she did so with a low grumbling protest, and the occasional prophecy.

"Ef Mars F'ed ever gits mahied, dars gwine to be ur herrikin in dis room as sho's you bawn."

As Stanley approached the table and untied the bundle his eyes fell at once upon a letter on top addressed to himself and marked "Important," followed by the words "See that this reaches Mr. Stanley at once."

He tore the envelope open and sitting back in his chair read while Sandy with the well known curiosity of his race, remained in the doorway with his eyes fixed on his former master, and waiting for some word or signal from him.

He did not have to tarry long. In a single minutes time he saw Stanley become deadly pale, his breathing labored, and then the letter flutter from his trembling hand to the floor, while the stricken man regardless of its fall, sat staring fixedly at the wall.

Sandy who had played with Stanley when a boy, and had been his body guard and attendant through the war, was devoted to him, and felt a genuine alarm and grief at the spectacle of the unmistakeable trouble before him.

"Mars Fred" he cried, "In de name ur goodness whuts de matter."

There was no answer from his employer, who really had not heard a word his servant had spoken.

The letter lay wide open on the carpet, and with the well known privilege granted the reader and author, we bend over the pages and read it together. It was written in a clear firm hand and evidently by a woman.

Yazoo City, May 3, 18..

Mr. Fred Stanley,

Dear Sir:—

You will pardon what may seem to be a great piece of presumption on my part, but I cannot see your life and happiness sacrificed without giving you warning.

The woman to whom you are engaged is utterly false to you, and undeserving your love or respect. I have seen enough with my own eyes on three occasions to convince me of her perfidy, and of the fact that you are a deeply wronged man.

She evidently loves George Varley and per-

mits him liberties that no woman engaged to a man could ever grant another and be a true and pure woman. She of course has taken great precautions to conceal from the public eye what I write you; but I have seen these happenings when the public was not around, but in bed and asleep.

You have been away now some days from town, and she does not look for you until a week hence, as she knows your business affairs are keeping you engaged. It is during the past few days that I have beheld the occurrences to which I alluded. She has had three buggy rides after dark with Mr. Varley, coming in late when most people have retired. This very evening she is to go ten miles down the river in a buggy with him to a dance or party of some kind given at Colonel Boltons. They will not get back to town before one o'clock tonight.

If you doubt what I tell you, you can obtain the ocular proof by hastening here, and stationing yourself not later than a quarter before one, behind the honeysuckle frame on the left side of the porch of the house where she is staying. These are moonless

nights, but you will see enough to know that I have not warned you without cause, as I deeply regret to say.

I send this up by the boat to-day, and mark it "Important" with the request to the Ware House man at the Landing to see that you get it at once.

I am a woman as you see by the handwriting, but I have no designs on you or yours. I am a married woman and twenty years older than yourself old enough indeed to be your Mother. As God knows my heart I feel only a mother's interest and a Christian solicitude for you. If necessary I am willing to let you and Miss Osmond know who I am.

There was no signature to the letter, but it needed none. The truth fairly throbbed through all the calm plain statement of facts.

Five minutes had gone by, and Stanley had not changed his position or altered his fixed abstracted look. He gave no other outward sign of what was going on within; but if a hand had clutched and wrung his

heart, he could hardly have endured greater agony.

Meantime light came pouring in on events of the past, bringing dreadful confirmation of suspicion, while Hope still clung to the possibility of some ghastly mistake, and Love reached out its hands and cried over the shattered idol.

Sandy's round bronze face had tears covering it when he spoke again.

"Mars Fred, kin I do anythin' fur you. It huts me pow'ful bad to see you ur grievin' dis way."

Stanley withdrew his eyes from the wall with a great effort, let them rest on his servant, and with a voice vibrant with suffering said:

"Saddle Roebuck and Wykoff quickly and bring them around."

Then noticing the look of sorrow and sympathy on the negro's face, he spoke again laying his hand on his shoulder.

"Don't mind me Sandy Boy. I'm all right. But quick with the horses; we have not a minute to lose."

Sandy brushed the tears from his cheek

with the back of his hand, and was off like a shot.

II.

In a few minutes the beat of the hoofs of Roebuck and Wykoff died away upon the listening ears of those on the Buena Vista Plantation, and the riders swept swiftly down the lake shore toward the "Landing" on the Yazoo River four miles away.

Stanley had quickly thought out his plan. He knew from the present state of high water that all the bayous in the Swamp were full and would so delay him in crossing and heading, that he could never reach Yazoo City by horseback at the hour mentioned in the note. He at the same time remembered that the steamboat which had gone up at midday, made what was called "The Short Trip," going only to the head of Honey Island, and so would soon return, passing the "Landing" at about 9 or 10 o'clock that night, and giving him the best and only chance indeed of reaching the desired destination in time.

Deflecting at last from the lake upon whose

bosom the descending Venus was leaving a trail of fire, the riders pursued their course through the woods, and after a hard gallop stood on the banks of the Yazoo.

Sandy soon built a large fire out of chunks and knots which he picked up under the trees, and the flames leaping up threw a broad band of golden light across the flowing stream to the opposite shore. Sitting down they silently waited for the coming packet. Far away through the still spring night they could faintly hear her whistle, blowing for landings five miles away overland, and ten by water. Nearer and clearer and fuller came the sound, and at last the boat turned the bend of the river with her lights flashing, her red and green lamps shining steadily on the forward deck, and the furnace doors, opened for a moment, sending a lurid glare over the waters and against the wooded banks.

Now then was Sandy's time to wave his fire brand, while the sparks scattered in the air with the movement; but the boat made no return signal. He waved again, and higher; and still no recognition of the sign. Per-

haps the pilot and lookout did not see it. Once more went up the blazing torch and then!—the soft musical whistle floated out, and a minute after the deep toned bell followed with a solemn sound the dying echoes of the whistle that still reverberated down the river. A few moments more and the silvery jingle of the bells in the engine room were heard, the great wheels rested from their long and steady beat of the waves, and an iron bracket filled with burning odorous pine knots threw out a red smoky radiance, illuminating a group of deck hands in the bow, and bringing out of the darkness the forms of the two men and horses on the shore.

Next the boat turned gracefully in the stream and headed up gently against the bank. The Mates voice rang out like a fog horn:

“Shove out that plank! Quick about it! Confound your lazy hides, are you going to take all night about it! Heave away there men!”

The narrow plank just touched the bank, and Stanley with a hasty goodbye to Sandy,

stepped swiftly along its length to the boat, and ascended the steps, as the great bell gave a toll, the little ones of the engine room merrily jingled, and amid loud orders from the ever boisterous officer, the plank fell with heavy echoing sound on the deck, the steamer turned her bow down stream, and with quick beat of the paddles rushed on her way to Yazoo City; while Sandy on Wykoff and leading Roebuck returned homeward through the shadowy forest.

As Stanley after a brief visit to the clerks office, moved away from the noisy group in the gentlemen's saloon and ascended to the hurricane deck, he noticed by his watch that it was not yet ten o'clock.

Taking a chair well forward, he gave himself up unrestrainedly to his gloomy thoughts. What a mission he was on! To discover that very night if the one he loved most was untrue to him; and if suspicion proved correct, to find the same night in the woman's treachery his own life wretchedness.

A starry Southern sky was overhead. The forest loomed up on either side like two long

black cliffs through which the steamer sped its swift way. Ahead the river with its steely gleam in the starlight would seem to terminate, but as the bend would be reached and turned, the shadowy banks would open like a gateway and there would be seen another stretch of star lighted water inviting onward the rushing vessel.

It is questionable whether the melancholy thinker saw any parable or hint in this scene of nature as to sudden openings and deliverance for the despairing heart and walled up life. He simply gazed forward with the one aching desire to get to the end of his journey and find there his respite or doom.

The trees on the shore were full of Katydids, and the night air was laden with their song which could be heard above the cough of the escape pipe and the heavy beat of the steamers paddles. They were singing "Katy did" and "Katy didn't," all the way down the river. There was a division among them about the matter. Stanley never heard their chant afterwards, without connecting it with this memorable sorrowful night.

Desiring for a moment to escape from his

reflections, he glanced back and upward at the pilot house. He could but imperfectly see the shadowed face and upper part of the man's form there as he silently stood now on one side of the wheel, and then with a slow movement would pass over to the other. Often he would make no change for minutes, but stand with an arm stretched along the tops of the spokes with his face looking silently and fixedly forward.

The time was coming when Stanley would again see that same man in another pilot house but under such circumstances of horror that he would carry the scene with him through Eternity.

The Captain sat in a chair close to the front guards, with his head and body bent in a meditative position. Stanley remembered that the man had a touching history which was only partly known to the public. It was said that he loved a very superior young woman, and had been, or was still engaged to her. Ten or fifteen years had rolled past and they had not married. Rumor said they never would! That something which no one understood had happened, and they

could not wed. So our young planter with a great pity looked at the bowed figure and said to himself:

"How many life tragedies are taking place all around us, and we do not know them. I am only one out of a great number of brokenhearted men."

The Katydids seemed to sing even more plaintively after this, but they did not reveal the secret they were chanting about. They said "Katy did" and "Katy didn't," which simply left the matter in the same old tangle and mystery of the centuries.

Stanley wondered if it was not really true as he had heard as a boy, that a woman was at the bottom of all the trouble in the world. He remembered a Rancho on a western prairie which was fifty miles from any human habitation, and where he had been belated once in crossing the plains. In the lonely cabin he found a solitary book with the title "Betrayed By A Woman." The owner of the place was not there, nor did he appear before Stanley left; but he felt somehow from the well thumbed condition

of the volume, that the book in some measure reflected the history of the hermit.

He found himself thinking of the Sorceress of the Nile and the noble Roman whom she ruined. Then his eyes fell again upon the lonely figure of the Captain. He knew from occasional movements of his hand that he was not asleep. The woman he loved was far away, and here he was, the man who loved her, bowed down and alone in the night. Stanley wondered if she ever lost any sleep on his account; and thought bitterly 'I guess not' as he flung his cigar in the waves.

Again he glanced up at the unlighted pilot house, and beheld the dimly outlined figure at its vigil, the left arm was still resting on top of the wheel, and the shadowed face still looked fixedly down the river. He wondered if the silent helmsman up there had any heart history, if any woman had ever tortured his mind or blasted his life. He marvelled if back of his steady gaze now directed down the stream there were thoughts of such an one whom he desired or dreaded to meet, and to whom every revolution of the wheels was bringing him.

There was no way of finding out, and the restless man turned back to the contemplation of the night, and to listen to the divided testimony of the Katydids, some of whom still continued to affirm that she did, while others as persistently declared that she did not.

Having but a couple of landings, the boat made a swift run, and so a little after midnight she blew her calliope-like whistle for Yazoo City, and hardly twenty minutes afterward Stanley was walking up the dark and silent streets of the town, his steps echoing from the store fronts and walls with a dreary foreboding sound.

Lights had been extinguished everywhere except at one residence where there seemed to be a social or musical gathering. A woman's magnificent voice was singing "The Crimson Bird." For two or three minutes after he passed he could hear the singer and even some of the words:

"Oh list not to the Crimson Bird

That sings on yonder vine

There is a voice of sweeter note,

Tis thine dear love, tis thine;

There is a voice of sweeter note
Tis thine dear love, tis thine.

Oh gaze not on yon distant star
That beams with rays divine;
There is an eye with brighter light,
Tis thine sweet love, tis thine;
There is an eye with brighter light,
Tis thine sweet love, tis thine."

He remembered how the woman he loved delighted to dress in crimson. As for the light of her dark eyes, how could he forget!

Passing in half a block of the jail he suddenly recollected that a white man who had been a Confederate soldier was to be hung in the morning. Glancing down the street he saw the gallows standing up stark in the starlight, and wondered if the man was asleep or awake, and whether he heard the woman singing.

He noticed as he walked on, that the dogs were barking all over the town. The woman's voice had doubtless aroused them, but he knew the negroes would say that they felt or saw the presence of death.

Pausing at last before a house with a large flower yard, and looking at his watch with the light of a match, he saw that it lacked exactly fifteen minutes to one. He swiftly opened the gate, and took refuge behind a honey suckle frame that bordered the porch. It perfectly hid him, while through the vines he had a clear view of the gallery and door. He had scarcely taken his position when he heard the whirl of wheels and a buggy with two persons in it turned the corner. In another moment the speed was changed to a walk, and in almost a noiseless way the vehicle approached. In an equally quiet manner the figures got out of the buggy, opened and shut the gate softly, and walked toward the house with guarded footsteps.

There was no trouble in recognizing them even in the starlight. There were few forms that could compare with the fair one Stanley gazed upon from his covert in the honey-suckles. With a sickening heart he observed that they were whispering as they advanced; and on entering the porch with

soundless footfalls, they did not approach the door but came to the most shadowy corner and in four feet of where he was concealed.

To his unutterable amazement and agony he saw her lift her face and entwine her arms around Varley's neck, the sleeves falling down beneath the elbow in the act, revealing the whiteness and roundness which he had so admired and of which he had been so proud. He saw Varley put his arms about her, bend down his head and their lips meet; and thus they stood for a minute.

For some moments Stanley thought he would suffocate, and his veins burst with the blood that swelled and packed them. Excitement, fury, indignation, all strove in his tortured heart. For an instant he came near rushing out and murdering the man, and then dashing the woman upon the ground, grinding his heel in her false and beautiful face and spurning her from his presence forever.

Like a flash however came the thought that this would never do, and with a stifled groan he clenched his hands around a slat

of the vine frame, driving a small nail deep into the flesh, and yet knew it not until hours afterward. The slight sound however disturbed the pair, and Blanche whispered quickly;

"What is that?"

"Just the birds in the vines. We aroused them."

Then again she sank in his arms.

By and by Varley spoke to her very softly, but so distinctly as to be heard by the agonized being near by:

"What would Stanley think if he could see us now?"

"Oh don't mention him. I don't want to think of him. I respect him, but I love you. Oh I wish you had money so we could marry!"

Again the woman's face was lifted, and the man's head stooped to meet it with kisses.

"Well I haven't, and that just ends the matter," replied Varley, "I have not enough to support us a week."

After a few moments he resumed,

"Why don't you love Stanley?"

"I don't know. I admire the man, but I do not love him."

"What makes you love me?"

"I cannot tell," she replied, "but when I am with you I feel like I am drunk."

Varley laughed his low triumphant laugh almost under his breath.

"Please," she pleaded, "don't laugh that way. I can't bear to hear it."

Several minutes more passed away, seeming like ages to the stricken wretched man in concealment. And yet there remained a great additional pang for him.

Varley spoke again,

"When you are married and I am invited to visit you at your plantation, or your house in town, will you feel differently, and act differently to me then?"

"Oh," she said breathing heavily, "Don't ask that. I will then be married to him."

The young woman seemed to be trembling all over, and reminded Stanley in spite of his mental suffering of a bird he had once seen charmed by a serpent. He remembered the distressing sensation it had produced

✓ in him as stopping his horse he looked at the sight. The woodland songster with wings extended and quivering, had its eyes fixed on the red open mouth and basilisk gaze of the snake which was stretched full length on the large limb of a tree, and not twelve inches removed from its fascinated victim.

How little he dreamed then that he would behold the same kind of thing reproduced on a so much higher scale of life, and when he himself would be so bitterly and disastrously affected.

He recalled how he got down from his horse that morning and taking a rail from the fence drew near the limb and with one crashing blow killed the reptile which fell with heavy thud upon the ground. The bird though freed from its captor did not at once fly, but looked and acted as if it was sick, confused and partially paralyzed. He recollected that it was hours before he could shake off the impression made upon him by the scene; and yet here he was beholding something unspeakably more horrible, where the human serpent was not destroyed, and the weak woman who was thoroughly in the

man's power showed no sign of disenchantment and manifested no desire for deliverance.

Again Varley spoke to her.

"I am waiting for your answer."

The woman seemed to be in deep thought; and then Stanley saw her drop her head on Varley's breast. He heard the betrayers low soft laugh again, and then whisper something. He saw the being he had idolized lift up her face, Varley bend to meet it, and his heavy moustache cover her mouth.

Not ten minutes had elapsed during this scene on the porch but to Stanley it seemed ten years. And when finally after more endearments the two parted, Blanche tipping away noiselessly and vanishing through the door, and Varley walking and driving off as quietly as he came, the unhappy man staggered out from his hiding place and reeled up the street stunned, dazed, half crazed and feeling like he had aged a quarter of a century.

A fourth pair of eyes, considerably older than the others, had been a silent witness of the scene on the porch, and now followed

Stanley with a tearful glance and the fervent petitions "God pity him! God have mercy upon him!"

But the man knew of no human sympathy, felt no relief from any quarter, and staggered aimlessly about for fully half an hour. He thought once of drowning himself in the river, then of shooting himself. He wanted to run like the wind and leave the black dreadful load behind which was crushing him. He felt like rushing into the forest, losing himself in the swamp, dying like an animal in a jungle, letting the vultures pick his bones, and no one ever knowing what had become of him. Everything seemed to cry out for suicide, and the various methods of self destruction came flowing in tumultuously like stormy waves beating on a strand.

In this condition while wandering from street to street, a watchman met and recognized him, thought he was drunk and calling him by name, advised him to go to the hotel.

Stanley was in a mental state where human voices were a torture, and he broke away from the man and fled up Adams street toward the hills that skirt the city on the

east. Next day the night officer told it around that he had found Stanley drunk on the street after one o'clock and he did not seem far from mania potu; that he acted like one beside himself and ran from him like a maniac. The report gained ground daily and many believed it. Already Fred Stanley was a misunderstood man.

After distancing the watchman, Stanley ascended the hill and sat for a couple of hours or more on the "Peak" looking down at the sleeping town. He could see just below him the locust grove where one evening at sunset he had told Blanche Osmond of his love and was accepted. He could easily locate the house where she was now staying and possibly sleeping, and all ignorant of his knowledge of her perfidy, and that agony into which she had plunged him.

He could safely groan aloud where he was, high up on the hill above the town. And groan he did while his burning eyes were dry as stone, and his heart felt like a great aching throbbing wound.

He heard a clock striking in some house on

the hill far beneath him. He counted three. He had been on the Peak nearly two hours.

Glancing to the right he saw the town cemetery a half mile or more away, in a kind of Sleepy Hollow valley. His father and mother lay buried there. There were no living people to whom he could go with his grief, and a great longing came over him to be near those dear dead loved ones.

Crossing the hills he passed over the branch near the graveyard, and climbing the stile, walked down the gravelled road with monuments and vaults on either side, and came in the starlight to his family burial lot. Closing the little gate behind him, he stood a moment in the dim light at the foot of the graves of his parents, and then with a bitter cry of "Father! Mother!" he fell groaning between the two mounds.

In the presence of his dead, years had swept away, and he had become a child again. How often their arms had been reached out and thrown around him in the trials and sorrows of childhood and boyhood; and here he found himself instinctively craving and seeking their help and comfort once more.

He put his face in the grass that covered his mother's form and flung his arm over the grave of his father, as if he would embrace the one who had been the strong earthly friend and protector of his life. He tried to pray, but could not. He cried out "Christ! Christ! Christ!" and once sobbed out "Have mercy."

Perhaps he was praying better than he thought; and was answered more than he at first dreamed was possible. Anyhow as the hours rolled over the prostrate form between the two graves, a part of the unendurable agony of mind was lifted, the suffocating grasp around the heart loosened, and a sense of incoming life and strength stole over the exhausted spirit. The feeling of bereavement was left, and a sadness voiceless and profound brooded upon him, but there had come calmness and power to both mind and body. There was an inward realization of ability to rise up and go forward with a life burden and sorrow, and make no sign, give no moan, and ask for no sympathy or help from the gaping curious gossiping crowd around.

The first pencilings of the dawn now appeared in the East. A mocking bird was singing from a large magnolia tree in a distant part of the cemetery, and the breath of the Cape Jasmine was faintly perfuming the air.

A little later, and the sound of wagon wheels on the high road and the whistle of a passing driver broke on the stillness of the City of the Dead, and Stanley knew that the world was waking up for another days toil and battle.

He walked out of the grave yard deadly pale from the nights suffering and exhaustion. His dress was in disorder, and the stain of mud and clay all unconscious to himself was on his hat and coat.

As he entered the main road on his return to town, he was overtaken by a number of milk, meat and vegetable wagons going at that early hour to the market. Their occupants looked wonderingly and inquiringly at him as they rattled past. Two butchers nudged each other and laughed.

"Out on a spree" cried one.

"Drunk again," laughed the other.

Stanley heard the remarks and guffaws of

the men as they drove on ahead and disappeared in the distance with occasional turnings of head and pointings of whip in his direction. Their misjudgment did not arouse any resentment. He simply said to himself with a sigh,

“Drunk? Yes verily, I am drunk: but it is with sorrow!”

Twenty minutes afterwards as he passed the Market, the two individuals of the wagon called the attention of several of their friends to him, and repeated their views and conclusions. And so the misunderstanding concerning the man went steadily on. The human judges were certain they had “sized up the case” as they called it, and yet had missed the truth so to speak by millions of miles, even as other character critics and executioners have done before, and will do so again in the effort to comprehend that profoundest of all mysteries a suffering human heart and life.

III.

Blanche Osmond came down to a late breakfast the next morning, and was dawd-

ling over a cup of tea and piece of toast, when at nine o'clock the door bell rang.

As the other ladies of the house were in their rooms, and the servant seemed to be absent, Blanche answered the summons, and found a colored boy bearing a letter which was addressed to herself.

"Who sent it," she asked.

"Mr. Stanley sont it Ma'am," was the reply.

"Mr. Stanley! Is he in town," exclaimed the surprised woman glancing quickly at the envelope and recognizing her fiance's handwriting.

"He was hyer, but he done gone now. I seed him git in a buggy, an' he moh'n haf way to Benton by now."

"What was he going to Benton for?" queried Blanche now full of curiosity.

"He aint gwine to Benton. I hyerd him tell a gemmun he gwine to Canton tonight, an' fum dah he gwine right on to Noo Orleans. An' he gin me ur haf dollar to fotch dis letter rounst to you."

Dismissing the boy, Blanche Osmond went with an anxious look to her room, and

locking the door, and taking her seat, opened the letter, and read the following lines. The agonized man had written four or five notes full of upbraiding and censure, but tore them up one after another, and finally composed and dispatched the last.

Yazoo City, May 4, 18—

Miss Osmond:—I was both a spectator and auditor of the scene and conversation which took place last night at one o'clock between yourself and Mr. Varley.

I spare you the upbraiding that naturally leaps to the lips in view of your treatment to a man who loved you with his whole heart.

It is well for us both that I discovered your character and the true state of your heart before marriage. Of course our engagement is at an end. My lips shall be sealed to all as to the cause of the rupture, as I do not wish to injure you in the eyes of the community. You are at liberty to make any explanation of the separation that you desire. I will promise not to contradict your statement.

F. Stanley.

For a moment the woman came near falling. Then collecting herself she read and

re-read the cold formal lines that went like daggers into her heart.

When she came down to luncheon, several hours later, she ate nothing, and looked so deadly pale that all inquired if she was ill.

In a few days the report was in circulation that Fred Stanley had been drunk on the street after midnight. This was followed by another rumor, that because of his disgraceful conduct, Blanche Osmond had broken the engagement. Then quickly on the heels of the second came the third installment of gossip, that Stanley in inconsolable sorrow had gone off on a spree to New Orleans.

There were some who stated that they saw him intoxicated at night and in the early morning; and others had seen him driving up the plank road toward Benton looking pale and miserable. So here was the proof.

These reports were brought to Blanche Osmond by acquaintances and friends, and in reply she smiled coldly and said that Mr. Stanley was nothing to her. This of course was a plain confirmation to the public of all that had been rumored in the case.

Another whisper started that Stanley had

jilted the young lady. No one could trace this to its source, but it began somehow, and ran its course like other bits of town talk. It was believed by a number, and reflected on Stanley more than the other adverse statements about him; for the male flirt is a character whom the true Southerner finds it impossible to tolerate.

At the dining table of one of the leading families in town, this last report was brought up. One of the daughters was begging that Fred Stanley be included among those invited to a reception to be given a niece of the family, who was to pay them a visit. The father from the foot of the table said,

"Let it not be mentioned again. A man who is seen drunk on our streets at night, and flirts with as fine a girl as Blanche Osmond is not the man I wish to have near a daughter or niece of mine; I don't care if he has got money."

"But," replied the daughter, "the report is that Blanche gave him the mitten. He did not jilt her."

"It doesn't matter," rejoined the indignant father. "If she threw him off, he deserved

it for his misconduct on the streets. The Watchman says he acted like a crazy man, and was on the verge of mania potu. And they say at the Market, that several there saw him close to Willis hill at daybreak, and that he looked like he had slept in the gullies all night. Blanche Osmond is to be congratulated upon her happy escape."

Thus the two reports went on; and as both of them were damaging to the already profoundly wronged man; so the misunderstanding of his character and the actual history of the case, increased as time and talk progressed.

Both pieces of gossip travelled up to Clear Lake and went the rounds in a weeks time among the neighbors. Most of the families of Stanley's circle were inclined to believe the first story, that he had been discarded by his lady love, and that he had gone to New Orleans to rally from his grief and mortification before returning home.

Sandy and Millie with the rest of the old family negroes believed that "Mars Fred hed flung dat town gal sky high," and were correspondingly proud of him for having done

so. They fairly hooted at the idea of any woman not being willing and anxious to get their young master for a husband. Millie with her arms akimbo before her wash tub declared to a circle of admiring listeners;

"Shoo! Whut you talkin' about. Sho's you bawn Queen Victoria would be proud fur one ur her darters ter mah'y Mars F'ed. She'd sho jump at de chance. Dat she would. You hyer me talkin' don't you."

Nearly two weeks after Stanley's departure from his place, one of the boats threw off a letter from him addressed to Bentley the Warehouseman at the Landing. It contained a request that he would get word to Sandy to meet him at the Landing with his horse on the next trip of the steamer.

Bentley concluded to deliver the message in person, and so found himself in due time at the big front gate of Buena Vista. The customary "Hello" given in a stentorian voice brought out a pack of hounds from the quarters, Stanley's large Newfoundland on the gallery, and Millie from her cabin wiping her hands on her apron as she approached.

"I came up to deliver a message to Sandy from Mr. Stanley. Where is he?"

"Whurs Mars F'ed? He's in Noo Orleans."

"No I mean Sandy: where is he?"

"W'y aint you hyerd nuthin tall bout Sandy? He's bin in baid gwine on mos' two weeks."

"Why no; whats the matter with him?" asked Bentley.

"Law bless yoh soul honey, he done mos' bus' his haid open er dressin' back. He done hut hissef pow'ful bad."

"What do you mean by dressing back?" queried Bentley, who being a new comer in the Swamp, was a stranger to many terms and expressions used by both white and black.

"Well I 'clare ter gracious," returned Mil-lie, "I thought ev'ybody know'd whut dressin back wuz. You know de night Mars F'ed done gonter Azoo City? Well he tuk Sandy to de Landin' wid him to fetch back his hoss. Arter Mars F'ed tuk de boat, Sandy he tun off to Major Burtons, to ur dancin' frolic some ur dem worl'y sinful niggers gin dat vah'y night. Now you know Sandy kain keep furr no place whur a banjer ur fiddle is a gwine

on; Sandy aint 'ligious lak me—Drat dat cat!"

Here Millie gave a cat, that in playing around her had stuck a claw in her foot, a kick that sent it flying about ten feet.

"Naw Suh," the woman placidly resumed, "Sandy nuvver got 'ligion lak me. He's sho' gwine to de Devil wid his banjer an' fiddle, always a pickin' an' a sawin' on 'em, w'en he orter be on his knees an' er sarvin' de Lawd —Law's a Mussy! did you nuvver see sech ur oudacious varmint as dis cat!" And stooping down she picked up the reoffending animal and taking it by the tail flung it over the fence. The cat of course landed on its four feet according to the feline custom, and then vanished down the path towards the negro cabins with its caudal appendage hoisted in the air like a sail.

Millie looked a moment after the domestic pet as it scuttled away, burst into a rich African laugh at the spectacle, and resumed;

"Well as I was gwine on to tell you; all de dancers was in de middle ur de floh, an' Sandy's part was to do de double shuffle ur gwine backuds all de time as he done it. And

he to 'stonish dem niggers wid some extry Jim Crow shines an' Buzzard hops, nuvver seed de back doh wide open; w'en all ur suddint outen he went backard an' lit on his haid an' jes' about brek his skull on de groun'."

"Well I never thought anything could break Sandy's skull" laughed Bentley.

"You's sho right 'bouten dat," broke in the woman with animation. "I tole him dat vah'y thing mohn' a thousan' times, dat he was too hardheaded fur anythin'. Naw Suh! Sandy's skull all soun', but de fall done twis' his naik, an' he bin mighty po'ly endurin all dese pas' two weeks. I jes lef him in baid when I come to see who dat hollerin' 'hello'."

Hitching his horse, Bentley followed the voluble woman toward her distant cabin. Several peach trees stood about it, and it was further ornamented in front with some stately sunflowers, and a gourd vine swinging from the roof. A half dozen bee hives were half hidden behind white blossoming, althea bushes, and two or three chicken coops rested on the ground. Several motherly hens were clucking around at the head of

their yellow feathered broods, that were chirping responsively in 'the golden sunshine.

"Yes," continued Millie picking her way through the little saffron beauties, "Sandy's bin in baid mosen two weeks wid his banjer lay'n long side ur him."

As she said this while the two drew nearer the cabin door, they suddenly heard the notes of the banjo, the regular tap and beat of a foot on the floor, and Sandy's voice sounding remarkably strong for that of a sick man.

Millie at a sign from Bentley stopped amid the clucking fowls, flitting bees and fragrant blossoms of the yard, and both stood listening to the recovered invalid, who all unconscious of an audience was singing one of his favorite melodies.

"De Possum air a funny thing,
He ramble in de dark,
But doan he cut de pigeon wing,
When he hyer my bull dog bark."

Then followed a banjo refrain accompan-

ied with a patting of the foot on the floor.
Phonetically it was

Tink er lunk, tink er lunk,
Tink er lunk, tink er lunk,
Tink er lunk, tink er lunk,
Tink er lunk, dunk, day!

Then came a voice refrain

“Farewell, farewell, farewell
My own true love.”

The foot beat grew louder and the voice
stronger as the song proceeded.

“De squirrel am a curus thing,
It totes a bushy tail,
It steals de corn fum my Daddy’s barn,
An’ husks it on de rail.
Tink a lunk, etc.,
Farewell, etc.”

Sandy was now well warmed up to his
work and it was a lively contest with foot
and banjo, while his voice floating like a

triumphant banner over all, came to the third verse.

“Ef I had a scoldin’ wife,
I’d whip her sho’s she born,
I’d take her down to Noo Orleans,
An’ trade her off fur corn.”
Tink a lunk, etc.
Farewell, etc.

Sandy was in the midst of his “Farewell, farewell, farewell, my own true love” when Millie with Bentley at her heels walked suddenly into the humble one-roomed cabin.

It had a cavernous fire place with a pot swung just over a smoldering fire. A cheap clock ticked on the mantel flanked with two gaudy Plaster of Paris images. A big pumpkin was in one corner. A setting hen on a nest of eggs under the bed, peeped out at the visitors. One of the rafters was garnished with half a dozen strings of red peppers, and as many garlands of onions. A bunch of yellow gourds hung on a nail high up on the wall. Two or three hide bottomed chairs and a crack glassed bureau with some wood-

en chests constituted the furniture; while a gay looking quilt on the bed disputed with two red and blue prints on the wall for wealth of color in the apartment.

Sandy with his neck enswathed in a huge white bandage, and with his banjo now fallen in his lap, sat in a chair gazing in a rather dumbfounded way at the visitors.

"Well I mus' say," cried Millie, "You'se done got well pow'ful suddent. Jes now you hed sech mizry in yoh haid, tell you kain git outen de baid to mek up de fire fur dinner; an' now you'se gwine down to Noo Orleans wid ur scoldin' wife. I'd lak ter know who's dat own true love you kain take wid you when you go?"

Bentley gave a ringing laugh, while Sandy for a few moments looked decidedly cheap and foolish. But Millie came to his relief with the words:

"Hyers Mr. Bentley Sandy, whuts come wid ur messige fum Mars F'ed dat he's comin' home on de boat dis nex' Chuseday."

"I sho' glad to hyer dat," said the negro with a look of genuine pleasure on his face.

"Well Sandy," smiled Bentley, "I heard

you had a crick in your neck and was laid up in bed from it."

"Twas wussen ur creek Suh, twas ekal ter a whole river, an' I kain git 'cross fur a week an' moh."

"I'm glad to see you are better at last," returned the visitor with an amused look at the big bandage and the banjo.

"Yes Suh," replied Sandy refusing to part with his gravity and his invalid look altogether; "Yes Suh, I'm feelin' quite peert dis mawnin'."

Bentley then gave Stanley's message about meeting him at the Landing with his horse, and turning to leave said;

"I'm glad you have such a good faithful wife Sandy: you ought to be thankful that you have such a woman to look after you and keep you straight." This last remark with a twinkle in his eye.

"Dats jes' whut I tell him ev'y day," broke in Millie. "But Sandy doan lissun to me, he's dat hard haided. Naw Suh he nuvver brek his skull. Hits nachuelly too hard to brek."

These domestic compliments Sandy receiv-

ed with an unmoved countenance, either because he had learned the philosophy of endurance, or knew that his wife's bark was worse then her bite.

In fact Bentley with his quick eye saw in the few minutes of his visit, that Millie was really fond of her husband, in spite of the tongue dressings she gave him. And though indulging in frequent verbal slams at his banjo playing, she was secretly proud of his accomplishment in that line.

Three evenings afterward Stanley arrived on the Tuesday packet, and was met by Sandy, now fully recovered, with the horses.

The negro was greatly pained at the changed appearance of his master. There were lines of deep settled melancholy on the face that a child could not but observe. Still Sandy thought in the brief conversation which ensued in their ride through the woods to Clear Lake, that he had never heard a gentler kinder accent in Stanley's voice than there was now.

Millie's eyes filled the instant she saw him, and with a woman's quick instinct, better understood the new spirit which had come up-

on the owner of Buena Vista. She urged a number of things upon him at the table as she waited on him that night.

"Mars F'ed lemme brile you ur nice spring chicken. Naw you doan want it. Well have some ur dese fried pyerch jes' caught dis vah'y evenin' outen de lake."

The silent man quietly refused, and with a patient smile which brought the tears to Millie's eyes again, left the table without touching scarcely a thing.

The gossip raged afresh about Clear Lake after Stanley's return, for the man's face considered stern by some, and sorrowful by others, gave a new spring and inspiration to the talk.

Through the garrulous negroes, Stanley was soon in possession of all that was said about him, both on the Lake and in Yazoo City. He made no reply in denial or self defense, but the lines grew more marked on his countenance, and his eyes with their hurt expression gathered a deeper shadow.

He made the carpenters finish the work about the house, and heard through his servants that this step had been termed by his

neighbors a "bluff," "pride" and "a stiff upper lip." He went on without a word, and in a month's time had an excellent young farmer named Corwin to move down from the hills with his bride and take possession of the new rooms, and become the manager of his plantation.

A week after this the neighborhood tongues were set going again with the tidings that Stanley had gone to Chicago to live, and had entered there upon the Real Estate business.

Months rolled by and one day the papers spoke of a great fire which had raged in Chicago, and how Stanley had distinguished himself by heroism of conduct, as well as coolness in the face of frightful danger. Where even firemen had stood appalled, he had gathered a small band of men, and in spite of falling walls and enveloping sheets of flame had burst his way through closed doors and windows and saved a number of lives.

This report of the bravery of the far away man had a double effect at Clear Lake. Some felt that he had been misjudged and became

softened in their feelings toward him. Others declared that the whole affair was a fine piece of acting, and that Stanley was trying to redeem the bad record he had made in Yazoo City.

Meantime at Buena Vista, Sandy took care of his absent master's horses and dogs, picked his banjo, and told ever increasingly marvellous stories of what he and Mars Fred had seen and done in the War, and what they had achieved in various camp hunts in the Swamp.

Millie kept the key to Stanley's room, guarding the apartment faithfully as he had left it. She gravely declared to listening whites and blacks alike, that:

"Mars F'ed done made so much money in Chicago dat he dunno whut to do wid it all."

It required but little effort of her nimble tongue and rich imagination to add:

"Mars F'ed done bought ur house fourteen stories high; rides outen ev'y ev'nin' in ur four hoss team, an' got a haf dozen ladies plum 'stracted bouten him."

With some, these highly colored stories of Millie had no effect save to awaken a

smile; but there were others who believed all they heard and even more; and felt it was but corroborative evidence of the character of a libertine and the life of a heartless soulless man of the world.

IV.

Nearly a year and a half had passed since Stanley had left Clear Lake for Chicago. Called by business to Vicksburg, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, he found himself one afternoon in October in the office of a hotel at the first named place. Awaiting a hack to carry him down to the wharf where he would take a steamer bound for the Crescent City, he carelessly glanced his eye over the file of newspapers on the desk, and saw one a week old from Yazoo City. As he was skimming the local columns he read the following.

"Miss Blanche Osmond who has been spending a month with her friends in this city, will leave us next week by river for her home in Louisiana. Report says that Miss Osmond is to be married in the near future to a wealthy merchant of New Orleans. This

gentlemen is certainly to be congratulated in having won so beautiful and accomplished a woman. He may well be proud of his prize."

In a few minutes more Stanley was in the hack, and soon on the boat which lay like a vast smoking leviathan in the midst of a long line of steamers at the wharf.

Two large river packets were to leave nearly at the same time for New Orleans, both loaded heavily with cotton and crowded with passengers.

A cannon was fired, and the steamboat Stanley was on slowly backed out and turned majestically in the stream with her bow pointed towards the South.

A crew of fifty negro deck hands stood in a cluster about a leader who was elevated several feet above them. One arm was around the jackstaff and the other waved a ragged hat in the air as he burst forth in one of the wild weird river songs or chants for which the old South was famous. First came the voice of the leader.

"Oh give my love to Juley."

Then with a storm-like rush came the fifty

tongued chorus in a strain that would defy all description, but which sent the blood tingling and shivering through every vein, and the quick gushing tears to the eyes.

The Refrain

"Ah-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

Here a single short line was doing what long speeches and voluminous books have often failed to accomplish. And a little word "Ah," treated by fifty negro men to minor notes, musical slurs, vocal swellings and dyings away, together with strangely pathetic lip, tongue and throat tremblings had hushed, melted or thrilled every passenger on the boat. The song had set the heart of everybody longing for something or somebody in a homesick disconsolate way that no pen or tongue could ever properly describe.

Again the leader sang or rather chanted:

"Oh tell her that I love her!"

Then the refrain;

"Ah-h-h-h-h-h-h!"

Stanley sat in his old favorite place on the

hurricane deck, drinking in the melody from the ragged black faced singers,' and listening to it die away on the distant shore, while wrapped in melancholy thoughts of the past.

Meantime the great floating palace with heavy puff of scape pipe and ponderous beat of its mighty wheels, had left Vicksburg glimmering in the sunset far behind, and was sweeping with majestic course down the broad mile wide channel of the Mississippi.

The numerous passengers were scattered over the boat in every direction, but Stanley according to his custom of late held himself aloof from all. A number of feminine eyes were turned upon him that evening with genuine interest; but none of their owners detected any returning glance of curiosity or admiration. To some he appeared a deeply absorbed man, and to others a person of remarkable reserve. No one in looking a second time would have attributed shyness and timidity to him. The fine cultured face as well as carriage of the body, showed a man perfectly at ease and accustomed to the best in what is known as the social world. He was a sorrow smitten man and shrank from

a life that in its conversation, customs and amusements would bring back the past.

He had nothing of the hermit spirit in him, for as it afterward appeared he had mapped out a course of conduct for himself in which considerateness and material help for others prominently figured. He was honestly doing his best to rally from a spirit of hopelessness into which he had been plunged by no act of his own. But do as he would, the old spring time in his heart refused to return, and the glad light of other days seemed to have gone from his eyes forever.

A something had left his life and disappeared from the earth itself. His heart had a sore feeling, and there pressed upon him almost continually a sense of personal loss and bereavement. The experience was akin to that of a man who has just left an idolized form buried in the cemetery and sits down, with face buried in his hands, on the doorstep of a desolated home.

Instead of an empty house however, the whole world looked stripped and lonely to Stanley. The woman he loved had not gone into the grave, but she had gone away from

him; and the sepulchre was not in the cemetery, but in his heart; and the death which had visited him could have no resurrection.

A woman's white hand had struck from his lips the cup of a sweet life joy that every man has a right to quaff. And the goblet was broken and the wine wasted in the dust. She had made existence itself to him aimless, purposeless and not worth the possession. And yet how he loved her! She did not, and never had cared for him, but Oh how he loved her! He told himself many times a day that she was unworthy of his affection and even respect, but his heart cried out for what he once thought she was, and would not be comforted.

As the negro melody had swelled forth that evening and died away in plaintive pleading echoes on the river shore, every chord of his nature responded to the line,

"Oh tell her that I love her!"

While an anguish swept over his spirit that left him faint, sick and trembling in his chair. He felt that he wanted to give a great wail of agony, and die as he uttered the cry.

Ashamed of his weakness as he mentally

called it, the suffering man summoned up all his strength, and inwardly said:

"No! Heaven forbid that she should ever know how she has made me suffer. Let her live and die thinking my love perished the night I beheld her weakness and perfidy."

The boat had sped fully twenty miles down stream. A string band was playing in the great saloon below, and the main body of the passengers were at supper, when Stanley found himself almost alone on the upper deck.

Glancing up at the pilot, he was struck with something about the man's face and quiet attitude that were strangely familiar. One arm was resting full length on the wheel and the eyes of the helmsman fixed steadily ahead in a way that reminded him of the pilot on the Yazoo River the night of his great trouble. Speaking to the Captain about it, he was informed that the man was the same individual. That he was a Mississippi River pilot, and had gone into the Yazoo work for a brief while, and recently had returned to the larger field.

As Stanley turned to descend to his state-

room he observed the other steamer a quarter of a mile astern, and from the volumes of black smoke pouring from her great chimneys, and "the bone in her mouth" he saw she was coming after them at a great speed.

Until he retired at midnight Stanley noticed that the boats were passing and repassing each other, as the advantage was given first to the one and then the other by the various landings that had to be made.

On the second night out, they were below Natchez. The white and blue cranes which had been flying before them all day long had disappeared. Here and there at wide intervals a solitary gleam of light on the shore revealed the location of some cabin, or mansion home. Points of mist protruded from the banks and looked like spectral fingers reaching out after them. The boat gliding swiftly over this inland sea of a river seemed to be floating between two firmaments, one twinkling above in the blue, and the other sparkling beneath in the yellow flood of the Mississippi.

By and by the moon rose, and gave a new glory to the monarch of rivers. The broad

stream, the distant shores, the two steam-boats perforated and seamed with glittering lights, with the soft silvery moonlight flung over all, made a picture of such beauty that numbers of both sexes lingered by the side guards, and on the upper decks until a late hour.

At eleven o'clock many of the passengers had retired. Others were engaged in games of cards. A few were dancing in the Ladies Cabin, and several couples continued to sit on deck and stroll about the boat.

Stanley, an old traveller on the river, was conscious from the violent trembling of the steamer that they were making great headway. Glancing up at the vast masses of black smoke pouring out of the funnels, and marking the increased stroke of the wheels, he felt convinced that a race was going on between the two rival boats. Looking back he saw the other packet a few hundred yards behind with the same inky pillars of smoke towering on high, and frequent angry glares of red light flashing from the furnace doors, showing they were receiving extra attention from the stokers in charge.

Descending to the lower deck, Stanley observed that not only great amounts of fuel were being cast into the roaring furnaces of the steamer he was on, but quantities of oil besides.

With a grave thoughtful face he went up the companion way and passing one of the officers on the forward deck he said carelessly:

"Are you not racing with the other boat?"

"Well," replied the second clerk with a laugh, "we are not exactly racing, but at the same time we are trying to keep the other boat from getting ahead of us."

"Why be in such a hurry," continued Stanley. "You are not behind your schedule time."

"That's true," answered the clerk, "but the boat that makes the next landing first, will get three hundred bales of cotton to carry to the City."

"I don't see," rejoined Stanley, "how you can take on more cotton with safety to the boat and passengers. You are already up even with the hurricane deck."

"Why shiver my timbers Sir," laughed the

clerk, "we could take on five hundred more bales and not be hurt." So saying he passed on and entered the office, while Stanley with the same concerned look ascended to the top deck.

He looked up at the pilot house, and there stood the man with his left arm lying along the wheel and his face set fixedly on the stream before him as though he had not changed attitude, look, nor boat since Stanley first saw him eighteen months before on the Yazoo.

Walking down the side of the vessel, Stanley stood near one of the wheel houses looking back at the other steamer which seemed to be gaining on them. He could hear echoing across the water the opening and shutting of the fire doors, the rattle of iron handspikes, the curses of the mate, and the cries of the stokers and roustabouts who were being stirred up to extra efforts and labors of some kind.

Ten minutes more went by, and Stanley could see their own steamer had recovered the lost distance, and that this fact was observed on both boats, as evidenced by great

scarlet glares of light from the furnaces and loud swearing from one vessel, and by the shouts of victory and derision from the packet he was on.

He turned from the backward view, and was looking forward with the intention of taking his favorite front seat, when suddenly, there burst upon his ears a frightful deafening roar and crash, that sent the blood flying back on his heart, while his eyes were horror stricken as he beheld the whole front of the boat become a volcano, the great stack chimneys veer suddenly wide apart, looking like a huge black letter **V** against the crimsoned sky, the pilot house sinking into the horrible vortex below, while the body of the pilot, distinct in the blended moonlight and blaze of the burning steamer was hurled a hundred feet into the air, and came down revolving and turning over and over as it descended amid a rain of cotton bales, cordage, timbers, and general wreck, and fell with a heavy plunge, a corpse in the muddy waves of the Mississippi.

Stanley needed no one to tell him that the boilers of the boat had exploded, and that

hundreds of lives had been or would be lost. Already the main body of the steamer with its vast amount of weight was careening. The screams of women and the loud calls and shouts of men resounded through the vessel. A number came rushing up the side stairways, when with an awful lurch the big palatial craft went over, and human bodies, life boats, bales of cotton and every thing else on deck went pouring down like a dreadful cascade into the river.

Stanley braced himself as well as he could when he saw what was coming, but was engulfed with the rest. Being a splendid swimmer he soon came to the surface, and lifting himself up to see who he could save in the midst of the foaming water and dancing bits of the wreck, he saw a lad with terrified face going down. With a few powerful strokes of his arms he was by the child's side and lifting him upon a large door said authoritatively to the frightened but obedient boy, "Stay there until some one comes to your help in a boat."

His next rescue was that of a man who was sinking the second time, but fortunately

was not far from him. Catching the drowning man by his collar, he lifted his head above the water, and literally pushed him with herculean efforts to a cotton bale, and helped him on this floating life preserver.

At this moment he turned and saw the head and white arm of a woman disappearing in the waves hardly ten feet away. A few vigorous overhand strokes brought him to the spot, and with a short quick dive he caught the sinking form. He lifted her above the water but was that exhausted from his previous exertions, and his saturated clothing was such a weight to him, that he felt he could not possibly swim with the rescued one any distance. Her very clinging to him, also jeopardized both their lives. He saw as he looked around in his distress, that the other steamer had arrived on the scene, and boats filled with strong rowers were pulling rapidly in their direction, but he was conscious that he could not keep up until they reached him. At the very moment however that he felt he must go down with his burden, a great beam of wood gliding past, struck him with a jar that under other circum-

stances would have extorted a cry of pain. But instead he gave one of joy, and throwing his right arm over it, and with his left arm about the woman whose head rested helplessly on his shoulder, he waited for the swiftly moving skiffs and yawls that were picking up people as they found them clinging here and there to anything that would bouy them up and save them from a watery grave in the tawny Mississippi.

In a brief while a boat reached Stanley, and powerful hands relieved him of his burden. The main impression made upon him as the being he had rescued was lifted into the yawl was, that he had saved a woman with a wealth of raven hair. He was helped himself into the boat at one of the sides, and took his seat near the rear, drenched, chilled, exhausted and pale as death.

Looking forward towards the woman he had preserved, their eyes met. There was a sudden mutual shock! and both instantly averted their gaze. He had saved Blanche Osmond's life, the woman who had wrecked his happiness!

Her glance fell at the first recognition,

but repeatedly afterwards she stole quick troubled looks at her rescuer, who sat like a marble statue not over fifteen feet away. He never turned his eyes again in her direction.

An hour afterward, the steamboat which had come to their help, having picked up half the crew and passengers, proceeded on her way down the river. One hundred and seventy had met death.

From a friend whom he met on the steamer, Stanley was provided with dry clothing, and now book in hand in the Gentlemen's Saloon had all unconsciously to himself resumed his quiet collected manner, and grave melancholy expression of countenance.

Both the lad and the man whom he had saved were on the boat, and through them alone he would have been lionized, but he steadily refused to be thus treated, insisting he had only done what any other man would have performed under like circumstances.

Later, a gentleman approached him and presented a note. Opening it Stanley read:

Mr. Stanley:-

Will you grant me a few minutes interview

on the backguards. I feel that I must thank you for saving my life. I want also to beg your forgiveness for the past.

I was confined all day yesterday to my stateroom with a headache, and did not know you were on the ill fated steamer. Will you see me now.

Yours So Gratefully,

Blanche Osmond.

Stanley finished the brief missive, while the ashen look he had in the river returned to his face. His fingers trembled like an aspen, but the eye and brow had the same resolute expression. Taking the note he walked to the clerk's desk, and slipping it in a white envelope, sealed the same without direction, handed it to the gentleman who was waiting and said:

"Please give this to the lady who sent you."

The man wonderingly did so, and afterwards reported that Miss Osmond wanted to thank her preserver in person, but he had refused to come; and that the lady looked as if a dagger had been thrust into her heart

when she opened the envelope and found her own note returned without a word.

Of course the matter was discussed on the boat by various groups. Some said that Stanley was timid in the presence of women; others thought he was a woman hater; still others suggested that he wanted to add to his own importance by acting like a Grand Mogul; while a few affirmed that he was a brave man, had done a heroic thing, but did not want to be gushed over and praised about it. Meantime he said nothing.

The next day Stanley disembarked at Baton Rouge to attend to some of the business that had called him from Chicago, while the steamer bearing Blanche Osmond to her home swept on to New Orleans.

Stanley came to the Crescent City a few days later, remaining there for a month. Before he left for Chicago he read in the city papers that Blanche Osmond had married a wealthy merchant of the Crescent City, and had reached her new and beautiful residence on Esplanade street. The same evening he left for his faraway home in the North.

The papers of course took up the river disaster, and full credit was given to Stanley

for his "bravery and noble conduct in saving three lives, among them that of Miss Osmond a beautiful girl soon to be married to a gentleman in New Orleans."

In Yazoo City the published report was quite a social tid bit. Some said that Stanley not content with having jilted the girl, was still pursuing her to add to her mortification and distress. The greater number stated their belief that Stanley was so desperately in love with the woman that he could not give her up, even though she had cast him off, and persisted in following her. A few remarked that they judged the meeting on the boat was purely accidental, and that anyhow he had saved her life, and this was enough to atone for his misconduct in the past.

A paper containing the full account of the steamboat explosion and Stanley's heroism was thrown off to Bentley at the Landing. He being a true friend of the absent planter, and knowing the warm feeling entertained by Corwin and his wife, and the devotion of Sandy and Millie for him, got on his horse to ride up to Buena Vista and do that most

enjoyable of things in the Swamp, read the news to a hungry eared and appreciative crowd.

He met Millie at the gate, and asked her to call Sandy at once to the front porch that he might hear read the splendid account about his Master.

Millie replied:

"Sandy would sho' lak to come, but He's monstus po'ly wid de rumatiz an' de skyat-tiker an' I dunno whut all; an' he kain git outen de baid."

"Well I'm certainly sorry to hear that," replied Bentley.

"Yes Honey," continued Millie picking her teeth with a splinter from the rail fence before her, "Sandy's bin pow'ful puny fur de las' month. But hes done got 'ligion doh."

"Yes?" said Bentley inquiringly.

"Law yes chile. Sandy aint bin as 'ligous sence he had de new moany las' winter. He's done quit pickin' his banjer now sho' nuff, an' dun jined de chu'ch on suspicion."

"On suspicion," ejaculated Bentley, "you mean on probation!"

"Yes dats whut I mean, but hits all de

same. Day puts em on trial to see whuther day gwine to do any ob day pas' devilment or not. Yes Suh, Sandy done jined on suspicion."

"And you say he's given up his banjo playing?" asked Bentley with an incredulous look.

"Yes dat he is. De ownless thing he do now is to sing hymes an' talk 'ligion. He got his banjer hung up clost to his baid whur he kin see it. An' he chunes it ev'y day, kase he say hits bes' fur de strings; but he won't pick chunes on it no moh."

"It seems to me," replied Bentley, "that if its wrong to play on the banjo, it would be best to put it out of sight; and all that tuning is trifling with temptation, and will lead him back to his old life."

"Dats jes whut I tole him dis mawnin'," interrupted Millie, "I sayd ter him, Sandy youse takin' er pow'ful long time ur chunin' dat banjer. De Debil gwine ter git you an' yoh ole banjer yit. But shoo! Sandy doan lissun ter me; an' he went on er chunin' an' er chunin' dat ole tinklin cymbal fur er whole hour."

Bentley laughed and added:

"Still I am glad to hear you say he is a better man, even if he does continue to tune his string instrument."

"Oh yes Suh. Sandys monstus improved. He done gin up his ole pipe an' quit confum-in de atmosphere wid his stinkin' ole terback-er. An' he done quit tellin' his jokes. Yes Sandys bin pow'ful 'ligious ev'y sence de doctors say he wuz dainjus sick."

"As he is so feeble," said Bentley "I will go down to his cabin and read to him there what is in the paper about Mr. Stanley."

Thus saying, he in company with Millie drew near the humble little home he had visited the year before. The pendant gourds were now yellow, the bees were humming amid the autumn flowers, and a pea fowl spread his showy beauty under one of the peach trees.

As they neared the house the sound of the banjo became quite distinct, and Bentley said to Millie:

"If that is tuning the banjo, it is the most musical tuning I ever heard."

They even thought they could hear a low

humming of the voice as if Sandy was singing, but in a way not to awaken and grieve his conscience. To Bentley the tune and words sounded wonderfully like:

"De possum air a funny thing."

But at the noise of their footfalls, the banjo notes suddenly ceased or rather changed, and the instrument began to send up tuning sounds of a most excruciating nature. Even with this adroit effort yet Sandy looked decidedly foolish and guilty when Millie said on her entrance with unmistakeable sarcasm:

"I woundn' hev sech ur banjer as dat Sandy, whut tuk up my whole time ur chunin'."

But embarrassment, and even rheumatic pains were forgotten by the devoted servant when Bentley read to him the thrilling newspaper account of the steamboat disaster, and Stanleys noble conduct in saving three lives, one of them being that of Miss Blanche Osmond.

"Whut she follerin Mars F'ed aroun' into de Mississippi river fur?" exclaimed Millie.

"Jes lissun to dat nigger," interjected Sandy. "How Miss Blanche gwine to foller

Mars Fred when dey bofe done blowed up, an' lit in de river onbeknownst to one anudder!"

Interrogations of course quickly followed from them both, and comments freely indulged in as only the African can express them, until Sandy in his interest and excitement forgot all about his rheumatism and other ailments. He had arisen from his bed and commenced walking around the room all unconscious of his recovery until his attention was called to the fact.

As Bentley walked away with Millie to see the Corwins, he was certain he heard the banjo going and the tap of a foot on the floor. Stopping a moment to listen, he caught the following words clearly and melodiously sung:

"Ef I hed a scoldin' wife,
I'd whip her sho' she born."

V.

For several weeks after his return to Chicago, Stanley found it exceedingly difficult to settle down to the routine of his office work. By his visit to Mississippi the past

had been revived, and the old wounds set to bleeding afresh.

A deeper sadness settled upon him which he vainly strove to shake off. Thinking that his lowness of spirits might be occasioned by a state of body, he lengthened his walks, rode more frequently on horseback, and increased his dumb bell exercises; but all to no purpose, for the heart load refused to be dislodged by any such physical means.

He then devoted himself more than ever to his business, and saw everything that he touched prosper and turn to money. But certain facts of the past, and certain faces connected with the happenings of other days, would keep coming in between him and his business letters, and real estate books, in spite of all that he could do, and his hand would go all unconsciously to his heart that carried a sore aching feeling all the time.

In addition to the melancholy, came a vague sense of coming ill or trouble; and with it a strong impression to leave Chicago and return South.

This last idea he combatted with his reason, and resisted with his will, as he regard-

ed it as the mere craving of a hungry heart and not to be yielded to for a moment. Moreover he mentally argued that there was really no need for him to go. Corwin was a capital manager and doing as well as he could himself. Then what alteration of the past and what improvement of matters could result from such a trip, or permanent move. He knew that nearly everybody believed he had been rejected by Blanche Osmond for supposed drunkenness, and he did not wish to injure her by declaring the truth and clearing himself. Even if he was base enough to wish to crush her with the facts of the case, no one would now credit his long delayed report of the matter. "No," he mentally said,—“It is better every way that I should remain here.”

With this conclusion he bent all his energies to his work, while the lines deepened on his face, and at the age of thirty he looked to be forty.

Without any special effort on his part, Stanley had attracted to himself some warm friends and admirers from his business associates. They all observed at this time the

increasing melancholy of the man, and strove in various ways to dispel it. But he firmly though gently refused all invitations to social gatherings and carefully avoided making a single female acquaintance.

He entertained no hatred for women, and indulged in no morbid raving against the entire sex because of the faithlessness of a single individual of that body. This mistake and injustice of little natures he did not commit. But as some animals when wounded creep off to a lonely spot in the forest to die unseen, so he who had received a death blow desired only to be left alone. He asked no sympathy, and burdened no one with his grief. He had not a single confidant at this time.

His own unspoken longing was that his joyless existence might soon be ended, and until that end came he determined to meet every trial and duty like a true man.

Another month rolled by, and again that strange inward whisper or leading to go South came upon him. But with something in him that the old philosophers possessed, and that the Indian exercised at the stake,

he hushed the cry of his pleading heart, stifled the impression that he regarded as a piece of superstition, refused to yield to what he called sentimental weakness, and went on in his business duties with the precision and regularity of a machine.

With the rejection of the inner impulse to leave, came again the foreboding of calamity; and yielding to that one day, he made his will and had it recorded in the Court.

One Sabbath evening in returning to his hotel from a walk, he passed a large Catholic cathedral. It was lighted, and the sound of the Vesper service stole out upon the street. Although a Protestant, he entered and took his seat. An audience of several hundred were scattered through the great building, the mist of fragrant incense was in the air, the lights glimmered star like from ceiling and wall, a priest in his vestments was bowed in the altar, while a woman's voice from a lofty pillared gallery led the choir in a chant full of melody and solemnity.

Beyond the chancel was a life sized painting of the Saviour as he hung upon the Cross. Some gas jets were so shaded and trained as

to illuminate the thorn crowned head, and the upturned sorrowful face with drops of blood on cheek and breast. The thought flashed at once over the silent observer as he looked upon the picture of the divine Sufferer, "He also was lonely and misunderstood"; and a strange feeling of consolation stole over his heart. He lingered until the service was concluded, and then walked silently and thoughtfully away. All the ensuing week his friends thought they recognized in him something like a spirit of quiet cheerfulness.

At this time, and late one afternoon he went into the southwestern part of the City to look at some lots which he proposed purchasing. It was nearly dusk when he started to return. A chill wind was blowing from the Lake. But buttoning his coat closely he concluded to walk the distance of three miles to his hotel.

The long rows of lights stretched in twinkling lines before him and to his right and left as he crossed street after street on his homeward way. The glow from lamp and fireplace threw warm tints on the windows of houses that he passed, and he had many

glimpses of bright cheerful homes. In one the children were clustered about a large center table looking at picture books, while the father and mother sat before a glowing grate fire engaged in conversation. In another he saw a man in a dressing robe reading the evening paper while a handsome dark haired woman was seated at the piano. Both visions of domestic peace and love went like a dagger thrust into his heart, and the old lines of suffering grew deeper than ever on his face.

He had traversed over half the distance, and was passing through a part of the city that he knew was not considered safe or reputable when the clock from a distant steeple sounded the hour of seven. He had turned down a side street in order to reach an avenue that was better lighted, when suddenly a door was flung open just in front of him, and a young woman with a piercing scream rushed down the steps closely followed by a coarse looking man swinging a cudgel. With a bound he overtook her and by a fearful blow struck her down to the pavement. He raised the club to strike her again when

Stanley threw himself before it and received the full weight on his left arm. The limb was broken, and dropped powerless to his side; but quick as a lightning flash he swung his well trained fist and landed a crashing blow on the jaw of the human brute. The man was knocked against the wall of the house and then fell full length upon the side walk.

Stanley supposing he had settled the bully for the time, turned to assist the prostrate woman. But the man though struck down was stunned only for a moment, and springing to his feet infuriated and burning with the double flame of alcohol and revenge, drew a pistol and approaching his unsuspecting victim fired directly into his side. The ball penetrated the heart, and without a single exclamation or groan Stanley fell upon his face and instantly expired.

Two policemen, and several citizens who had been looking on from doors and windows and beheld the frightful scene, now ran to the tragic spot.

The young woman whose life had been saved at the cost of another, was borne into the house by her friends; and the murderer

an insanely jealous husband was rushed with nippers on his wrists to the nearest Police Station.

The dead body of the Mississippian was taken into a neighboring drug store, an ambulance summoned, and fruitless efforts made to restore the extinct spark of life. When the surgeons arrived they pronounced that death had been instantaneous.

From cards and letters in the pockets, the name and address of the murdered man was discovered, and in a short time friends had arrived. The coroner gravely pronounced what everybody already knew, and the silent form of the martyr was removed to the parlors of a leading undertaker.

In a leathern wallet on his person, a copy of Stanley's will was found. On opening it his friends read the request that in case of death his body should be buried in one of the cemeteries of the City of his adoption. The desire was regarded; and after considerable telegraphing between parties in Chicago and relatives in the South, and after some had arrived to take part in the funeral services, the body of Fred Stanley was laid to

rest not far away from the white capped waves of Lake Michigan.

The newspapers published the whole account of the tragedy, the family history of the murderer, his jealousy and brutality, Stanley's protection of the woman, the knock down blow he gave the man, and the cruel murder that followed. The article, graphically and forcibly written was several columns in length.

In some way the reporter got a copy of the will found in the pocket of the slain man, and this was published in connection with the rest of the account. Among other bequests, it was found that he had left ten thousand dollars to Sandy and Millie, one thousand to Corwin, five thousand to a poor clergyman in his native State, ten thousand to the College where he graduated, and fifty thousand dollars to an Asylum for the Rescue of Young Women. The remainder of his estate, estimated at three hundred thousand dollars was to be divided equally between the sons and daughters of a deceased brother.

The press printed the facts of the murder correctly, but not everybody saw the papers, and obtained the news second and third hand. So there were serious alterations in the way of additions and embellishment. All this of course set tongues to going again on Clear Lake, and in other regions as well. The following were some of the utterances.

"Killed in a brawl on the street."

"Got mixed up in a family quarrel."

"Knocked a man down on the pavement and got shot for it."

"What on earth was he doing, meddling in other peoples affairs."

"A woman was in the case! The husband was jealous. Oh yes, I see it all!"

And so the tongues wagged; and some imagined they saw everything, when in reality they beheld nothing.

However there was a revulsion of feeling with many, and there were quite a number who spoke as follows.

"How sad! He was a fine fellow in the main."

"That drunken spell of his on the streets

here was very unfortunate. It was quite unlike him."

"He certainly was a brave man."

"He covered himself with glory in that Chicago fire, and in the Steamboat explosion."

"That last act of his in protecting that woman was a noble one."

"Poor fellow, I am sorry he is dead."

Among the silent ones in Yazoo City was an elderly lady who had written that fateful letter to Stanley in regard to Blanche Osmond. She read the description of the tragedy with streaming eyes and an aching heart. One mental question kept arising with her, and would not down: "Had I not better to have kept silence and left him unwarned."

Bentley could not speak of the shocking occurrence without breaking down; while Corwin and his wife had red eyes for many hours.

As for Sandy and Millie they were simply inconsolable, and wept and wailed with a genuineness of grief that no one doubted. Sandy never touched his banjo again.

"De Musíc done all gone outen me," he said with a burst of tears.

Down in New Orleans a woman with black eyes, raven hair, and queenly form, sitting in her room devoured the published account with a countenance of horror and despair. When the last word had been read, the paper slipped from her cold trembling fingers to the floor, and like her victim had done in his room nearly two years before, she sat gazing at the wall opposite with a face that had become deadly white and set as if carved in marble.

Her husband a man nearly thirty years her senior came in and found her in this position. He saw the paper and the head lines of the long dispatch which he had read already in his Library. Placing his arm about her, he said:

"I know this must be a great shock to you Blanche. No doubt you feel badly because you remember that he saved your life. But all the same he was unworthy of you. So do not give him another thought."

The woman made no reply, but sat with hands tightly clasped in her lap and her

handsome head bowed until he could not see her face. He continued:

"Forget all about him my dear. He was a rowdy by nature, and proved it by his drunken spree that night in Yazoo City. He was not the man for such a good pure woman as yourself."

Still there was no reply from the white faced wife.

"I have wondered Blanche," pursued her husband with a worried accent in his voice, "how you ever happened to engage yourself to him. You surely did not love him."

"No, I did not love him," came the slow studied answer.

"I thought not," quickly rejoined the husband with a deeply relieved and gratified look on his face. "Now forgive me my Queen for having referred to a past that cannot but be painful to you. I promise never to do so again." And the deluded man stooped and kissed his wife. Then with a lightened heart and satisfied smile he left the room and descended the stairs to the street.

Concealed by the lace curtains the woman

watched him as he took a car for his place of business. Then turning quickly with a gesture of despair she flung herself face downward on the floor and burst into a perfect convulsion of weeping.

"No," she cried out, "I did not love him then, but I do love him now! I have loved him from the hour I received his letter and knew what a man I had lost. I loved him when he saved my wretched life and I saw him sitting pale and exhausted in the boat, and refusing to look at me. And Oh! he would not let me thank him! And he never forgave me!"

Great choking sobs shook her form, and the woman's agony was something fearful to see. An unexpected Nemesis had arisen in her breast that was inflicting some of the suffering and torture she had so cruelly heaped upon another for weary days and months that seemed to have no end.

Her wedding gift clock chimed out three times the half hours as she sighed and wept upon the floor. Finally sitting up and leaning her head against the sofa with the paper spread before her, she read again the whole

account from beginning to end. As she re-read the Will, the different bequests shone out with a deeper meaning and revealed the generous nature of the man. The gift to the impoverished preacher, and his remembrance of his two servants brought the tears afresh to her eyes. The legacy in behalf of young girls made her think profoundly for awhile, when suddenly a light seemed to flash in her mind, and taking the paper up she pressed her lips repeatedly upon that portion, and murmured:

"Maybe he loved me through all, and in spite of all."

Dropping her head upon the white rounded arm of which he had once been so proud, great tears rolled down her cheeks and dropped upon the carpet.

Finally with interlocked hands, she raised her head and said,

"Why should such a man like he was, be allowed to die such an awful death, and in the very prime of his life!"

And an inward voice seemed to whisper:

"If you had been a true woman, he would not be dead to-day."

